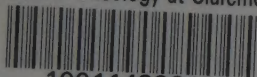


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THE
PLEA OF THE DISCIPLES
OF CHRIST

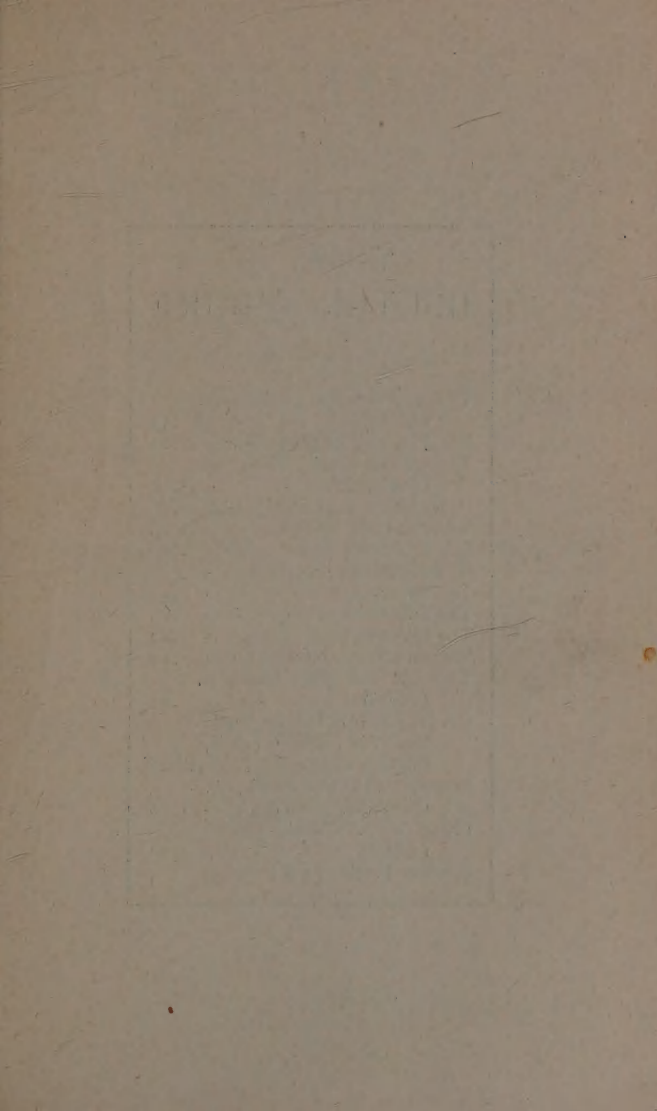
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THE PLEA OF THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

OR

THE PRINCIPLES AND AIMS OF A
RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT

NEWLY STATED AND CRITICALLY EXAMINED

By W. T. MOORE, M. A., LL. D.,

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Ethics and Journalism in Christian College; Eleven years

Editor of the "Christian Quarterly" and twenty-
one years Editor of the "Christian
Commonwealth," London,
England, etc., etc.

Veritas, a quocunque dicitur, a Deo est.

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PREFACE.

The origin of this volume may be briefly stated as follows: The author was requested by the officers of the Christian Church, at Columbia, Missouri, to deliver a course of lectures before that Church on the Plea of the Disciples of Christ. These lectures were prepared for that special purpose, but afterwards were delivered at several other places, where they were received with much enthusiasm, and in some instances they were heartily commended for publication. They are now given to the public exactly as they were first delivered, except in a few places where they have been expanded somewhat by the introduction of new matter. In no essential characteristic, however, have they been changed.

This fact will explain certain peculiarities of style which otherwise might not be understood. The aim of the author was to adapt the lectures as far as possible to a popular audience, and he has thought best to preserve that style in their book form, even at the expense of a certain literary dress which he would personally have preferred; consequently, while the lectures are somewhat critical in places, it has been the aim of the author to bring them as far as possible within easy range of the people generally.

It is believed that there is need for such a volume as is now given to the public. The author values very highly the numerous statements of the

Plea of the Disciples which have been made in the past. Many of these are excellent, so far as they go; and for the times for which they were intended they are all that could be desired. But we have reached a new day. The religious world has moved up higher than it was even ten years ago. The great "Interchurch Conference on Federation," recently held in New York City, perhaps could not have been held at any other period in the history of the Church. While that conference did not aim to accomplish Christian union, it really did more than was expected of it. It was the first distinctly clear, ringing note to give utterance to a predominant feeling which has for sometime been working its way to the surface, viz., that the days of sectarianism are numbered, and that henceforth the union of God's people must be the watchword throughout the whole of Christendom.

Let it be distinctly understood that the Disciples of Christ have had much to do in bringing about this state of things. For nearly a century they have been pleading for Christian union, and they have been pleading for it on the only ground which can be occupied by all Christians, and that would make a union permanent as well as desirable. The mission of the Disciples has been, in my opinion, providential. While they have augmented their own numbers by an almost phenomenal increase, this result of their movement has perhaps been the least important of the things they have actually accomplished. Their influence upon other religious bodies has doubtless been the most valuable

part of their work. The whole of religious society has felt the influence of their Plea, and this influence is now showing itself in the Christian union sentiment which prevails to a large extent throughout the Christian world. It is probable that the source of this influence may not be recognized by others, and even the Disciples themselves may not fully understand how much they have really done in producing the state of things which now exists; but, all the same, their movement was the most influential factor, during the nineteenth century, in bringing about the religious condition which now prevails at the beginning of the twentieth century.

But all the work is not yet accomplished. Much still remains to be done. While the spirit of sectarianism has been largely cast out, the old ugly form still survives. The future work of the Disciples of Christ is not only to overthrow Sectarianism in all its forms, but to bring about a union of all God's people on the one foundation of Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. In the following pages I have attempted to show how this may be done.

It may be well to say a word concerning the title of the book. Some object to being called "Disciples of Christ." They prefer to be called "Christians." But this gnat-straining does injustice to the great Plea represented in this volume. The followers of Christ were first of all called Disciples, then Believers, Brethren, Children of God, Saints, and last of all Christians. Any of these names, however, are Scriptural, and there-

fore proper as designations of the people of God; but no one of them should be appropriated to the exclusion of any other Scriptural name.

The author has used the name—Disciples of Christ—because of historical convenience, not because he prefers it to other Scriptural names; though as a matter of fact, Alexander Campbell advocated the name “Disciples of Christ” in preference to that of Christians on Scriptural and reasonable grounds.

In that recent and masterful work of Prof. Harnack, entitled the “Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries,” the first chapter of Volume II, opens with a luminous discussion of “The Names of the Christian Believers,” in which he shows that various names were used by the early Christians for the purpose of representing certain respective view-points from which these Christians were considered.

The religious people, known as Disciples of Christ, or Christians, have always repudiated any and all human names, and they have also refused to adopt even a Scriptural name that practically excludes any other Scriptural name. At their great convention, held in St. Louis, in 1904, a committee reported in favor of the “Church of Christ” as the official name of the body; but this part of the report was stricken out by an overwhelming majority, because it seemed to imply that other Scriptural names are not proper.

According to Prof. Harnack, the title—“the Church of God”—(*ekklesia tou theou*)—was almost universally adopted, during the second cen-

tury, to designate the collective body, while the term "Christian" was commonly used as the name for individual members of the Church. This was an easy transition from the earlier practice, and especially so as the first title had Apostolic authority for its use. "Church of God" is undoubtedly the prevailing title in the New Testament, and if certain sticklers for a particular name would honor their own Plea for the inductive method in the interpretation of the Scriptures, it seems reasonable that they should adopt the title "Church of God," instead of "Church of Christ." But the wise thing to do is to retain all Scriptural titles, and then there is no difficulty whatever concerning the matter of names.

The present volume is unique in one respect at least. While stating fairly, and in a somewhat comprehensive manner, the principles and aims of the Disciples, the author has not hesitated to criticise where he believed criticism was necessary. Of course he is personally wholly responsible for these criticisms; but he cannot help believing that the candid way in which he has treated the movement will commend itself to all other religious bodies, and will generally be approved by Disciples themselves. At the same time he is vastly more anxious to speak simply the truth than to receive the commendation of either Disciples or any other religious people. *Veritas nihil veretur, nisi abscondi.*

W. T. MOORE.

Columbia, Missouri, January 1, 1906.

THE PLEA OF THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST COMPREHENSIVELY CONSIDERED.

PART I.

WHAT IS THE PLEA WHICH THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST MAKE?

This question has been answered again and again by some of the ablest writers and speakers among us. Each one of these contributions has been of considerable value in giving to the world the genesis, principles and aims of the movement; and taken altogether they furnish a most valuable record for the historian of the future to set forth the things that are most assuredly believed and taught among us. While freely and joyfully conceding this much, it is believed that there is still room for a new and more comprehensive statement of our principles and aims. While it is not proposed, in the Lectures which are to follow, to treat the whole subject exhaustively, I am fully persuaded that there is great need for a somewhat new definition of our Plea; and consequently I will proceed at once to inquire what are its distinctive features, when it is considered from a comprehensive point of view?

I. It gives a true conception of the Bible. I begin with this because it is properly the beginning. From the human view-point we cannot understand religious things at all except through a Divine revelation. This fact has been accepted from the beginning of our movement as absolutely fundamental, without which it would be impossible

for our Plea to have any vital religious significance whatever. Consequently the fathers of our movement were careful to emphasize the great value of the Bible as a revelation from God concerning His will; and to this earnest, persistent and uncompromising contention much of our success may be properly ascribed.

In the early days of the movement, nothing, perhaps, was more frequently heard from our pulpits than the statement that "the Bible and the Bible alone is a sufficient rule of faith and practice." In other words, that "all Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Just here it is well to notice a false conception, concerning this contention, which has sometimes had considerable currency among those whose zeal has been greater than their knowledge. I refer to an unnecessarily limited meaning of the statement to which reference has just been made. When it is said the Bible alone is a sufficient rule of faith and practice, it is not meant that no other source of information may be used in helping either our faith or our practice. The statement referred to, when properly understood, is simply the antithesis of humanisms thrust upon the religion of Christ. It is practically a protest against human creeds as rules of faith and practice in our religious life. It was never intended by any intelligent interpretation of this dictum to exclude the lights of nature, or any other lights which might supplement legitimately the revelation which God has made through his Word. The best thinkers, among the Disciples, have always contended that Revelation and Nature are co-ordinates, and that therefore religion and science are handmaidens, and must not be separated in any

comprehensive treatment of our religious movement. The Bible and the Bible alone cry was a necessary voice in the wilderness of human creeds saying, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. It was not a narrow, proscriptive edict, which meant to anathematize the laboratory and exalt the theological seminary; but it was rather an intimation to both to keep within their proper respective spheres, and thereby co-ordinate their influence in the great work of enlightening the world and securing the salvation of souls.

However, it is well to give this statement concerning the Bible a most prominent place in our religious movement. The celebrated "Declaration and Address," made by the Campbells in 1809, affirmed, in effect, that, where the Bible speaks we should speak, and where the Bible is silent we should be silent; and this is still as true as it was when it was first made. if it is interpreted in its true, contextual meaning. We certainly have no right to add to or take from what the Word of God has enjoined with respect to our holy religion. This is precisely what the Campbells meant, and when thus understood, this dictum ought to be written in letters of gold over the pulpit of every church throughout the entire world.

However, it is undeniably true that this dictum of the Campbells has been greatly abused by perverting it from its original meaning. The Campbells meant it to apply mainly to *principles*, but some have regarded it as equally applicable to methods; and, consequently, they have demanded that no methods in Church work shall be used which are not divinely authorized by either precept or example. These strict constructionists have found this dictum of the Campbells a sword that cuts to pieces all missionary societies, as well as all other "innovations," as they are called.

They say where the Scriptures are silent we should be silent also, and as the Scriptures are silent with respect to missionary societies, etc., they must be regarded as innovations and without any warrant in the Word of God. Now this sword has two edges, and therefore cuts both ways. I have noticed that those who use this sword to cut to pieces missionary societies, actually do more speaking than anybody else. They are never silent concerning the matter of their contention, although they say the Scriptures are silent, and, therefore, according to their interpretation of the dictum in question, they should be silent also. But they are noisy sometimes beyond endurance, and, consequently, they provoke others to speak where they would gladly be silent.

All this nonsense is easily disposed of if we remember that the dictum of the Campbells was intended to apply simply to principles, and not to ways and means by which these principles may be made effective.

I would be the first to defend any brother in the exercise of his right to preach the Gospel, or to assist in preaching the Gospel, without belonging to any particular missionary society in existence; but while I would defend him in his right to choose the means by which he will work in the salvation of souls, I cannot defend him when he opposes those who seek their own methods for doing this work when these methods involve the organization of missionary societies. But much less can I defend him if he makes his opposition to some particular method a reason for neglecting his duty to send the Gospel to the lost by any method whatever. As long as he is doing his best to carry the Gospel into all the world and preach it to every creature, I will be profoundly silent as regards the method he uses, provided it is in harmony with the principles and spirit of the religion

of Christ; and this harmony may be determined very largely by the following statement, viz.: *No method is likely to be wrong which makes abundant sacrifice to carry the Gospel to the heathen, while no method can be right which withholds the Gospel from the heathen, and at the same time complains of those who are doing the work which needs to be done.* The command, to go, is imperative, and must be obeyed, though the method of this going is not determined in the Scriptures, while concerning the command to stay at home and complain of those who do go, the Scriptures are as silent as the grave.

But the plea for the Bible and the Bible alone expresses only a part of the Disciple contention as regards the Bible, and it is far from being the most important part. The religious movement of the Disciples has given a *new meaning* to the Bible through a scientific interpretation of that book. Nothing distinguished Alexander Campbell's advocacy more than his earnest plea for a rational interpretation of the Bible. No one has ever opposed more vehemently than he did the dogmatic and mystic methods of treating the Word of God. His whole system of hermeneutics is based upon the dictum that the Bible is an intelligent revelation of God, and can therefore be understood when properly treated by a legitimate method of interpretation. He contended with a vigor almost transcendent that all that the Bible needs, in order that its light may shine as the noonday sun, is fair and legitimate treatment in its interpretation. While defending this view he did not hesitate to meet the infidel Owen, the Roman Catholic Percell, the Presbyterian Rice, and many others in public debate wherein Mr. Campbell's contention was vigorously maintained in a manner seldom equaled and perhaps never excelled in the art of theological polemics.

In looking over these great debates the reader of the present day must be especially struck with the fact that Mr. Campbell's superiority consisted largely in this very point of view of considering the Bible as a book capable of a rational interpretation. His was mainly the inductive method. His hermeneutics consisted chiefly in letting the Bible tell its own story in the simplest possible manner. He believed that Scripture should be used in the interpretation of Scripture, and consequently when all the passages of any particular *class* were carefully brought together they would infallibly give us the particular truth concerning that class, just as is the case with respect to the inductive method when applied to nature.

Do we inquire what is the boiling point of water? The answer of course must come from an induction of particular cases. First of all we must remember that the thing to be demonstrated is the boiling point of *water*, not *oil*, nor any other fluid. Now when several experiments have been made at different points, the results of these experiments are brought together; and when all the circumstances are taken into the account, as to difference of atmospheric pressure, etc., the conclusion is reached that, at the sea level, water will boil when exposed to heat of 212 degrees Fahrenheit.

Similarly we may determine any fact of the Bible under consideration. Let us take as an illustration the meaning of *eis*, in Acts 2:38. I select this passage because it has been a battleground almost from the very beginning of our religious movement to the present time.

Now how can the meaning of *eis* be determined with absolute certainty as regards this passage? We must consider the whole phrase in which *eis* is found. We find this same phrase, viz., "For the remission of sins," in only three other places in

all the Bible. Let us bring these four cases together. The Greek in each case is precisely the same, viz., *eis aphesin hamartioon*; and the translation is the same for all the passages, viz., "For the remission of sins." Now does *eis* have a retrospective or prospective signification? Does it compel us to interpret the passage in Acts 2:38 to mean "*because of*" the remission of sins, or in "*order to*" the remission of sins? The answer will come as soon as we can determine the result of our induction.

John the Baptist was the first to use this phrase, and the record of its use is found in Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3. In both cases it is stated that John came preaching the "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Evidently John did not preach the baptism of repentance *because* the sins of the people were pardoned; and it is just as evident that he did preach the baptism of repentance *in order to* the pardon of their sins.

In the only other case where the phrase occurs (viz., Matthew 26:28), Jesus says, "This is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Now, it is impossible to believe that Jesus shed his blood *because* the sins of the people were *already* pardoned.

Taking these cases altogether, with the one in Acts 2:38, certainly the conclusion is inevitable that the phrase, "For the remission of sins," means *in order to* the remission of sins; and consequently *eis* has a prospective signification, making the conclusion absolutely certain that the Pentecostians were told to repent and be baptized, not because their sins were already pardoned but *in order to the remission of sins*.

This reference will show the Campbellian method of hermeneutics, and will also serve to clear away a good deal of superstition with regard to a passage which ought to be fundamental

when giving instructions to inquiring souls who are seeking to know what to do to be saved.

Another illustration of this method of interpretation may be helpful at this point. The Disciples have always treated the different cases of conversion, recorded in the New Testament, in the spirit of this inductive method of reasoning. In answering the question, "What must the sinner do to be saved?" they have not been satisfied with a reply which is limited to one or two passages of Scripture, which perhaps has little or no relevancy to the question under consideration. They have always been careful to select the Scriptures which are specially designed to deal with the question of the *kind* under consideration. They have contended that we must not chronologically go on the *other side* of the great commission which Christ gave to his Apostles before his ascension to the Father. Indeed, they have regarded all cases of salvation *prior* to the giving of this great commission as special, and without any particular relevancy with regard to the general rule which Christ gave to his Apostles, *after his resurrection from the dead*.

But they have not been satisfied to even quote this commission; for a rule may be interpreted in different ways, by different persons, under different circumstances; consequently, they have insisted upon the interpretation given to the commission, as illustrated in the various cases of conversion recorded in the book of Acts, as the Holy Spirit's interpretation of the commission, given in examples under the Apostolic ministry. By quoting all these cases, and by taking into consideration the circumstances of each case, they reach the general conclusion that faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, are the conditions, on the human side in order to salvation. These conditions are not all named in every case, but where they are

not named, they are clearly implied, when all the special circumstances are taken into the account. In the boiling of water it is seen that the circumstances are of great importance. When the observation is taken on a high mountain, the difference in the pressure of the atmosphere must be considered before we can make this observation correspond with the one which we take at the sea level. But when this difference is accounted for, the two observations will completely harmonize, and both teach the same fact, viz., that water boils when exposed to a heat of 212 degrees Fahrenheit.

Now when the different circumstances are taken into account with respect to Peter's answer to the Pentecostians, Paul's answer to the Philipian jailer, the answer of Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch and Ananias's answer to Saul of Tarsus, these answers will all thoroughly harmonize with one another, and when taken altogether they will clearly teach that the Holy Spirit's interpretation of the commission is that it included all the conditions which are mentioned in the cases of conversion recorded in the book of Acts.

In this way we have, in the examples solved under the rule, a clear exposition of what the rule means, and consequently Disciples have contended that, in order to make no mistakes about what the great commission teaches, it is absolutely necessary to consult Apostolic practice in applying this commission to the great work of saving souls. Consequently, Disciples have contended that, by using this inductive method, and by making example the explanation of precept, it is quite possible to arrive at infallible certainty as regards the conditions of the Gospel in order to salvation.

But this is not all our reformatory movement has done in giving a right conception of the Bible. From the beginning we have taught that the Bible

is a progressive revelation, and that therefore *dispensational* truth is most important. We have to reckon with the Patriarchal dispensation, the Jewish dispensation, and the Christian dispensation. We must, therefore, study the Bible from the point of view of each of these dispensations. What was intended for the Patriarch may or may not be binding upon the Christian; what was intended for the Jew may or may not be binding upon the Christian; but what was intended for the Christian is undoubtedly binding upon him no matter what may have been the ways or means for the government of men under the other dispensations.

In the light of this progressive development, a thousand things become intelligible in the teaching of the Bible which otherwise would remain in confusion, if not in Egyptian darkness. I have not time to illustrate this point, but it has always been fundamental in the teaching of the Disciples, and is, in my opinion, one of the most valuable contributions our movement has made to Biblical interpretation. And I do not think I am mistaken when I say that our movement is largely responsible for this great contribution. Doubtless other teachers have more or less referred to this same distinction, but no one has emphasized it and given it the important place which the Disciples have done in dealing with the Word of God; consequently it will readily be seen that the Disciple movement has really given a new and important value to the revelation which God has made to us in His Holy Word.

Perhaps nothing has distinguished the hermeneutics of the Disciples more than their earnest insistence upon a proper division of the Word of God. They have not only emphasized the importance of dispensational truth, but they have constantly affirmed that the Bible, as a whole, must be divided so as to correspond to the different

dispensations; consequently they have not only recognized two distinct covenants, viz., the old and the new, but they have sought to arrange, under each one of these, the various departments of the Bible which specially belong to each of these covenants. They have not generally gone so far as I would go myself, but they have made this contention of a proper division of the Word of God very prominent in all their discussions. I wish to personally express my deep conviction that the binding of the Old and New Testaments together in one book, and calling that book the Bible, or the Word of God, and then affirming that this Word is a sufficient rule of faith and practice, can scarcely be regarded as in harmony with all the facts of the case. Indeed, I am decidedly of the opinion that the binding of the two Testaments together is the source of much confusion in the Christian world. Christians are not under Moses but under Christ; it is not their duty to preach the law, but to preach the Gospel; we are not bound by the Old Testament, but by the New; and this being the fact, I believe it would have been much better for the cause of Christianity if the New Testament had always been published as a separate book, and then Christians would have appealed to it as their authoritative rule of faith and practice, rather than to the whole Bible, as is now very generally the case.

It must not be understood by this contention that I believe the Old Testament is of no value to Christians. That is quite another matter. I believe it is of very great value. But at the same time I believe also that this value would be better appreciated if the Old Testament were entirely separated from the New in its authoritative character. As history, as a revelation of God as well as of man, under the old dispensations, it should be studied with profound reverence and with the greatest interest; but all the same, it must not be

reckoned as specifically an authoritative rule of faith and practice for those who claim allegiance to the Christ.

Certain subdivisions of the New Testament, which the Disciples of Christ have usually made, should be regarded as a distinguishing feature of their advocacy. They have insisted that the New Testament itself must be properly divided in order that its contents may be easily understood. For instance, the four Gospels are intended specifically to give us the right conception of Jesus the Christ; the Acts of Apostles should be studied chiefly from the point of view of answering the question as to what the sinner must do in order to be saved; the Epistles of the Apostles are intended to instruct the Church, or the saved, as to what must be done in order to spiritual growth and an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom; while the book of Revelation is intended to show the struggles and final triumph of the people of God in this world.

In short, the four Gospels tell us of Jesus the Christ and his commission to his chosen Apostles; the book of Acts tells us as to how these Apostles interpreted the great commission which they had received in proclaiming the Gospel and gathering the saved into the Churches; the Epistles of the Apostles take up the matter of the divine life, with these Church members, and teach them how they are to be built up in faith, hope, and love; while the book of Revelation is a constant inspiration to the people of God by showing them that whatever their trials or persecutions may be for a time, their final victory is certainly assured.

It will readily be seen, I think, that this method of interpreting the New Testament is not only orderly, but is actually founded on the philosophy of the whole scheme of redemption, and consequently the New Testament cannot be easily understood, if understood at all, without giving some considera-

tion to the specific parts to which I have called attention; and this being the case, it must be evident that the Disciple movement has done much for the religion of Christ by giving a rational interpretation of the Bible. While their contention for the Bible and the Bible alone as a sufficient rule of faith and practice is all right as far as it goes, their greater and more distinctive contention from the beginning has been that the Bible can be understood only by the wise and honest use of the scientific method of interpretation. This I regard as one of the most distinguishing features of their plea, without which every thing else would have been a failure.

II. A True Conception of God.—This I think is the most fundamental characteristic of our religious movement. A religion will always be as its deity is. Every thing produces after its kind. This law holds good in religious matters as well as in nature. It is universal in its application. This being true it necessarily follows that a religion will take on the type of the God that is worshiped by those who hold to that religion.

The religious movement of the Disciples had its origin partly in an effort to change the conception of God which was prevalent at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This conception had been inherited from the apostasy which spread such vast ruin over the Christian world during the middle ages. This mediaeval conception embraced at least three errors:

First. That God is a great personal governor who sits upon a throne, apart from the present world, and rules his creatures by imperious and unchangeable laws.

Second. The administration of his government on earth is wholly committed to a specially appointed human priesthood, who practically occupy the position of mediators between God and the subjects of his kingdom.

Third. The worship of this God can be acceptable only through forms and ceremonies, and in an environment which this priesthood chooses to create.

Now I am fully persuaded that I have not overstated the facts of the case. Of course there may have been other conceptions, and probably were, with respect to the particular points indicated; but no student of ecclesiastical history will doubt that the statements I have made fairly represent the general trend of religious development at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

In opposition to these three predominant characteristics of the age, when our religious movement started, our pioneers affirmed at least three distinct Biblical conceptions of God. They affirmed with all the fervor of deep conviction the following Biblical statements:

First. God is Spirit.

Second. God is Light.

Third. God is Love.

With respect to the first of these, viz., that God is Spirit, they referred to the conversation of Christ with the woman of Samaria, and earnestly contended for the truth of the statement made by Christ himself in that memorable interview. He declared that God is *Spirit*, and his contention was that as God is *Spirit*, they who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. In other words, the worship must be spiritual, and not merely sensuous; and then it must be a truthful worship, and not based upon false conceptions of God or anything else.

It is well to notice the exact language of our Divine Lord. He does not say that God is *a* spirit, but that God is *Spirit*. The Greek is *Pneuma Ho Theos*. It is not personality that is affirmed of God, but his essence; and consequently being pure *Spirit*, he cannot dwell in particular places or temples, for the Most High dwelleth not in houses

made with hands, as is declared in Acts 7:45; 17:24-25; nor can he require earthly material offerings or special ceremonies, or any other man-made machinery, through which he may be approached. Indeed, this affirmation of Christ was intended to be a protest against all limitations of God through an objective personality, which compelled the worshiper to think of God as only manifested in material representations. Our Lord's statement is equally conclusive against image worship and all mere forms and ceremonies, such as became the ruling passion with mediaeval Christianity, some of whose evils were prominent characteristics of the Churches at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

It is well to analyze somewhat carefully the statement made by Christ concerning God. As already intimated the statement does not affirm the *personality* of God, but his *essence*. The personality is taken for granted, while the essence is distinctly declared. Look carefully at this phrase—*Pneuma Ho Theos*. Notice the article before *Theos*. This assumes the personality of God. Notice, furthermore, that there is no article before *Pneuma*. This clearly indicates the important fact that God, viz., this Divine personality, is, in his essence, pure Spirit. This being true, he seeks such worshipers as will meet him in this essence. Nowhere else in the New Testament is there a stronger argument for the birth out of the Spirit, as indicated in the third chapter of John, than is found in this important statement of Christ. God's personality is for the moment absorbed in his essence, and thus supreme transcendence is made to harmonize as well as vitalize with his providential immanence. Hence, he is not only over the world and apart from the world, in the fact that he is in his individual personality, *Ho Theos*, but he is also in the world and providentially moves and helps the world, because he is essentially *Pneuma* or Spirit.

Thus we have, in this sublime statement of our Divine Lord, both the transcendence and immanence of God clearly set forth. But in order that we may render acceptable worship to him we must be born from above, or born out of water and out of Spirit, thus meeting God in his essence by an essence of the same kind; and as we have borne the image of the earthly we should also bear the image of the heavenly. Man was created in the image of God, but in the fall this image was lost, or at least was marred, and the restoration in Christ Jesus makes us again like God, or fixes upon us his likeness, in that we become spirit as he is Spirit. Hence, the new spiritual man who comes out of the new birth is the only kind of worshiper God seeks, or who can worship him in both spirit and in truth. Thus it will be seen that God, as Spirit, became flesh, that man, as flesh, might become spirit. Or to put it more in harmony with our modern style, God was manifested in the flesh that he might come down to man and touch his sympathies, awaken his dormant spiritual energies, and bring his spiritual nature into regnancy from which it fell when the animal man triumphed over the spiritual. Surely nothing could exalt our conception of God more than this sublime fact which is evidently the main burden of the incarnation.

The conception of God which our movement seeks to give to the world is that God is not only Spirit but is also Light. In 1 John 1:5 it is declared that "God is Light." The Greek is *Ho Theos Phoos Esti*. Here again we have the personality of God taken for granted, for the article is used before God, as in the other case already referred to; but there is no article before *Phoos*, so that it is true with respect to light as with respect to spirit. The very essence of God is light. No wonder that, when his Spirit began to move upon the great abyss, God should have uttered that wonderfully sublime fiat: "Let there be light." Light

did not come out of nothing, as some have supposed. It was an emanation from God himself, from his own essence, and on the first day of the renovation of the earth this light was manifested. This is still the order in the *re-creation* which is intended to restore man into the favor of God from which he fell through transgression. All turning to God must begin with the same fiat: "Let there be light."

Our religious movement emphatically affirmed the importance of light in order to the salvation, edification, and glorification of man. It was claimed by our pioneers, and is still emphasized by the Disciples of the present day, that the way back to God is not through darkness, for darkness begets superstition; but through light, for God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all. Consequently, if we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (see 1 John 1:6-7).

But the crowning revelation of God to us is the statement that He is *Love*.

Just here we come in contact with the need of that dispensational truth to which I have already called attention. The revelation of God, that he is in his essence Love, was reserved for the Christian dispensation to proclaim in its fullness or comprehensive import. Under former dispensations God is revealed to us as a sovereign, as the "Lord of hosts," "The God of battles," etc., but under the Christian dispensation he is revealed to us as a tender, loving Father, so loving the world as to give his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Under the Patriarchal and Jewish dispensations God was chiefly a covenant God, who required an exact fulfillment of all the stipu-

lated conditions of each covenant, and offering no remission of sins except through a sacrificial institution which had no permanent value, and through a law which was only a shadow of the better things to come. The Disciple movement affirms with great earnestness that we are no longer in the shadow but in the very light which came with Christ, who is himself the light of the world; that when Christ reached the zenith of his glory, the shadow was under his feet; that we are no longer under the "shalls" and "shall nots" of the Mosaic institution, but under Christ, where God has been translated into the family circle, and now reigns there, as well as in the kingdom over which he formerly reigned.

I am satisfied that this new yet old conception of God, viz., that God is Spirit, God is Light, and God is Love was the beginning as well as the strength of the reaction against hyper-Calvinism, which *ism* was so prominently characteristic of the religious development of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Disciple movement practically based its whole contention concerning God upon the three affirmations which I have quoted; and yet strange as it may appear, this is, I believe, the first time that any public utterance has ever been made that this conception of God is perhaps the most fundamental thing in our religious movement. This singular fact illustrates how prone the human mind is to seize upon and magnify subordinate matters to the neglect of those things which lie at the very foundation of the superstructure which we are considering. Our principles and aims have been frequently set forth by able writers, but not one of these writers has given any special prominence to the true conception of God which the Disciples have everywhere advocated, and which has been all the way through their history the most distinctive and important contention which they have made.

III. A True Conception of Christ. There are three great facts concerning the Christ which must be considered before any just estimate can be made of his personality. These facts are:

First. His incarnation.

Second. His death for our sins.

Third. His resurrection for our justification.

No adequate understanding of his mission to the world is at all possible without dealing faithfully with these great facts.

First. *As to the Incarnation.* I have already touched upon the incarnation in what I have been saying about God. Nevertheless it may be well to notice how this Incarnation fits in with the history of our race. In this history there are also three facts brought distinctly into light.

First, that man will not be governed by God. Every experiment of this kind, beginning with the experiment in the Garden of Eden, proved to be a failure.

A second fact is equally prominent, viz., man, when left to himself, cannot govern himself. When the Israelites would not be governed by God and cried out for a king, God gave them a king, but it was not long until it became evident that they would not be governed by man, and this fact has been demonstrated again and again in the history of the world.

The third fact is the union of these two facts in a compromise which meets in the Incarnation. When it was sufficiently demonstrated that man would not be governed by God and could not govern himself, God gave him a governor who is both God and man, viz., Immanuel: God with us; thus uniting the interests of Heaven and earth in one great personalty, who, while faithfully doing the will of the Father, is at the same time touched with the feeling of our infirmities, sympathizing with us in our weakness, and adding Divine help, so that we are enabled to do even all things

through him who strengthens us.

It may be well to remark also that the possibility of the Incarnation need not be a stumbling block for any one. Of course with God all things are possible, and therefore those who believe in God need have no difficulty in accepting the story of the Incarnation as it is found recorded in the New Testament. At the same time, it can be shown that, on scientific grounds, the birth of Jesus and the assumption of human flesh by *Ho Theos*, who is in his essence Spirit, need not stand in the way of any one's faith, from a philosophical point of view. Perhaps the main difficulty in the minds of these who object to the Incarnation, on scientific grounds, arises from the fact that they have separated humanity and divinity entirely too far apart and consequently they have augmented the difficulty in bridging over the chasm by which the Incarnation can be made reasonable.

As a matter of fact God and man are not so far apart as many have supposed. The main thing that separates them is *sin*, and when this is removed they are really very close together. We are told in the Scriptures that man was created a little lower than God. Hence, he undoubtedly stands next to God among created intelligences. Angels are his ministering spirits, and he is to finally judge these angels, thus making it distinctly evident that he is higher in the scale of creation than even these Heavenly messengers.

What is the meaning of that remarkable phrase, "Created in the image of God?" Does not this clearly indicate that, while man is differentiated from God, he is nevertheless like God; and consequently there is only a short step from Deity down to humanity? Perhaps, if we could explore this narrow territory, which separates God and man, we would understand better, from a philosophical and scientific point of view, the reasonableness of the Incarnation. At present our eyes are holden

with respect to this unexplored division line, and it may be that we shall never understand it perfectly until this flesh which now hinders shall have returned to its mother dust, and our spiritual essence shall have free course to know as even now we are known. In any case we must wait until we are bidden to come up higher.

Second. *The atonement, or reconciliation, must be considered in any worthy conception of Christ's mission to the world.* "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Around this sentence the Disciples have gathered their forces, and in its light have fought the battle of freedom from the entangling difficulties of both Socinianism and Calvinism. They have persistently refused to accept either one of these extremes. While not attempting to formulate a scientific statement of the atonement, they have vigorously opposed the extreme statements which have been made by others, which statements, for the most part, either eliminate the atonement entirely or else practically eliminate the God of the Bible and substitute for him an imperious personality who orders everything according to certain decrees which he made before the foundation of the world. It may be said that the whole position of the Disciple movement concerning the work of Christ in the salvation of men can be summed up in the statement of the Apostle contained in Romans 5:8-12; "But God commendeth his own love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from wrath through him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life; and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."

Without analyzing fully this important passage of Scripture, it is well to notice the fact that the Apostle distinctly separates the death of Christ from his life, ascribing reconciliation to the former and salvation to the latter. Indeed, this is practically the style of the New Testament from beginning to the end. While undoubtedly it is true that the life of Christ gives character and potency to his death, this life is never specifically confounded with the death, when the reconciliation is under consideration.

Of course, in a certain sense, everything connected with Christ enters into his great work of redemption; but this in nowise justifies us in confounding things that essentially differ. Salvation is ascribed to faith, to the life of Christ, to calling on the name of the Lord, to the Grace of God, and to still other things. Now this fact must not be construed to mean that all these are not associated in the whole work of saving men, but only that each one of these has its specific place in the scheme of redemption, and, as such, this place must be kept clear of interference by other things that might be substituted for it. "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son," it follows conclusively that, after this reconciliation has been effected through the death of Christ for our sins, then we shall be saved by his life, for the Christian's life is not his own, but Christ liveth in him, and it is also true that his life is hid with Christ in God.

Third. *The Resurrection of Christ is for our Justification.* This is the crowning conception of his work. We must not only be reconciled to God by the death of his son, but we must be saved by his life; and our redemption must be justified before the whole universe of God, and also Christ himself must be justified in what he has done for us; and this is effected through his resurrection, for God has given proof to all men that he is the

Christ in that he has been raised from the dead.

Just here it is important to state that the Disciples have more than any other people emphasized the fact that Christ is the foundation of the Church, and that he is now our Prophet, Priest, and King. As our Prophet he is our only infallible teacher; as our Priest he is our only intercessor; as our King he is our only ruler. As our Prophet we must hear what he says; as our Priest we must trust implicitly in the efficacy of his intercession, for he ever liveth to make intercession for us; as our King we must unhesitatingly obey his commandments.

It may be that other religious bodies have, to some extent, given prominence to the same conception of Christ which the Disciples have set forth; but so far as I am informed (and I think I have gone carefully over the whole field of investigation), no religious people have emphasized and made prominent this conception of Christ *as* the Disciples have done. From the very beginning of their movement they have made faith *personal*, and not *doctrinal*. They have insisted that to believe in Christ with the whole heart is all that is necessary, so far as faith goes, in order to salvation. The great proposition that Jesus is the Christ the son of the living God has been fundamental in their religious movement ever since it was first inaugurated.

In the presence of this proposition they have met the enemies of truth from every point of view. They have met the Romanist by insisting that *Petros* is only a little stone, and is, therefore, insignificant, while *Petra* the foundation of the Church, is a rock with large dimensions, and immovable as the eternal hills. I myself have witnessed at Caesarea Philippi both the little stone and the majestic rock which doubtless Christ had in view before his eyes at the time he made the great declaration recorded in the sixteenth chapter

of Matthew. Hence, no other foundation can any man lay except that which is laid, even Jesus Christ the son of the living God.

As already intimated, the Disciples have earnestly contended for the sufficiency of the Scriptures as furnishing a rule of faith and practice. But they do not build the Church on the Scriptures, or accept these as having in themselves the power to save. They make us wise unto salvation; they guide us in the way of salvation; they lead us to him who only can save to the uttermost all who come to God by him; but the Church is built on Christ himself, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

Finally, there are at least three very special points of view from which the Disciples have regarded the great mission of Christ to the world.

(1) As the revealer of the Father.

(2) As the head of the Church, reigning in and over his people.

(3) As the sovereign over all things, guiding and controlling the affairs of this world to the spread of his kingdom, until all the earth shall be subject to his authority.

What Philip desired is, to some extent, the universal desire of mankind, wherever any knowledge of the Father exists. We all say in some form or other, "Lord show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." The answer to Philip by Jesus is his answer to us." He still says, "He that has seen me has seen the Father."

If there is anything that distinguishes the mission of Christ to the world more than another it is this very fact that in him is a revelation of the Father to us. We have already seen that God is Spirit, and that, therefore, it is impossible for us to see him in his essence, for no man has seen Spirit at any time. But it is possible for us to see the Father though Jesus Christ, for he is God manifest in the flesh.

I have already intimated that a religion, in its development, follows the conception which that religion embodies of its author. Surely, then, it is of the greatest consequence that we should have a true conception of God, if it is desirable that the religion we profess should itself be a true manifestation of the truth. Jesus the Christ is the embodiment of our conception of the Father, and it is therefore through him that we must see and understand the religion which is intended to represent the Father.

Jesus the Christ is also the head of the Church, while the Church is declared to be his body. This figure emphasizes a very close relationship between Christ and his Disciples. As the members of our body receive all their instructions from the head, so the members of the Church, which is Christ's body, should receive all their instructions from him who is the head. His will must be the final authority in everything that relates to the Christian's faith and conduct. A "thus saith the Lord" must be final as regards everything that enters into the Christian life.

In this respect, it is believed that no other religious people have given such emphasis to Christ's mission as have the Disciples of Christ. They have not only recognized Christ as the foundation of the Church, but they have also insisted that he is the head over all, and that, therefore, he is the source of all authority in Heaven and in earth, as regards the principles and practice of those who are his followers.

The Disciples have also strongly accentuated the universal Lordship of Christ with respect to all the affairs of this world. They have not dogmatically insisted upon any particular view of what is called the millennium. As a body they are neither pre-millennialists nor post-millennialists. They have always allowed the widest possible liberty with respect to questions of this kind, as well

as eschatological questions, or questions relating to the future life. The only point with which they are especially concerned is the great fact that in some way "all things are working together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." They insist (and so strongly do they insist that this is practically an article of their faith) that some way or other the final outcome of the present struggle will be the subjection of this world's powers to the authority of him who must reign until all enemies are finally put under his feet, and He shall be recognized everywhere as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

IV. A True Conception of the Holy Spirit. There can be no doubt about the fact that when the Disciple movement was first inaugurated the religious world was under some curious delusions with respect to the Holy Spirit. This was doubtless owing to a certain reaction from the purely human religious development of the Middle Ages. The Apostasy was a somewhat gradual growth. It began to work during the latter part of the Apostolic age, but its development did not reach its full flower until during the Middle Ages. The reformation under Luther turned the tide in the opposite direction. Slowly but certainly the reaction from medieval superstitions and humanisms began to develop toward a more rational and worthy view of things.

However, this reaction had not reached a normal state at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and especially was this true as regards spiritual influence. The work of the Holy Spirit was more or less identified with all kinds of incantations and superstitions, until conversion, in the popular estimation, became real only when it became irrational; and the Christian life, instead of being a steady and normal growth, was supposed to grow only through jerks or sporadic and spasmodic developments.

Nor has this state of things entirely subsided. Even now it is unquestionably true that what is called revivalism finds its main pillar of strength in abnormal views of the work of the Holy Spirit. It may be, and possibly is true, that as regards this matter, in getting away from Babylon, some have gone by Jerusalem. All history teaches that extremes beget extremes. It would be expecting too much that a movement, which was intended to correct the abuses to which attention has been called, should never go beyond the point of oscillation in the pendulum, and never rise too high on the other side. Progress does not move in exactly straight lines. Its course is always zigzag. It is from one extreme to another, though in the long run the forces of true development ascend higher and higher up the hill.

Disciples of Christ have always recognized joyfully and earnestly the important work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and salvation of men. They have been misunderstood and misrepresented with respect to this matter; and doubtless for the reason that men who occupy an extreme position with respect to any subject are usually unwilling to admit that there is any middle ground that ought to be tolerated. The Disciples have always, in the main, contended for a conservative position with respect to the work of the Holy Spirit. In regard to the baptism in Holy Spirit they have not always spoken in the language of the Scriptures, though their chief contention has been in the right direction, viz., to teach the Christian world that conversion is not necessarily attended with signs and miracles; that God's power is not in the fire, the wind, nor the earthquake, but in the still small voice that speaks through the Gospel of his love, and through all the sympathies of the suffering Christ woos the sinner to the outstretched arms of him who is the great rest-giver and Savior of men.

Disciples have used the phrase, "Baptism of the

Holy Spirit," as though it was a legitimate and Scriptural phrase, and have then sought to get rid of this Baptism by declaring that it is always accompanied by the gift of tongues, as in the case of Pentecost and the house of Cornelius. But this view of the matter is not at all necessary, if we stick to Scriptural phraseology. There is no such thing as the "Baptism of the Holy Ghost" or "Baptism of the Holy Spirit," mentioned in Scripture, nor is the idea, conveyed by that phrase, anywhere found in the New Testament. The Scriptural phraseology is "Baptized in Holy Spirit," and the idea conveyed by this phrase is that Holy Spirit is the element in which the agent performs the Baptism. Christ is the agent. John declared that he would baptize in Holy Spirit and fire. Consequently it is Christ that performs the baptism, and Holy Spirit is the element in which the subject is baptized.

The fact that the article in the Greek is not used before *Hagion Pneuma* is very suggestive, and this suggestiveness becomes almost overwhelming when, by a careful induction of cases, it is found that the article is never used when reference is to operations, gifts or manifestations of the Spirit *in men*; nor when the Spirit is regarded subjectively. In such cases, it would seem that the Divine writers intended to suppress, for the moment, the personality of the Spirit and to regard only the Spirit in its essence. When the Holy Spirit is spoken of as itself, or is regarded *objectively*, then the Greek is *To Hagion Pneuma*, the article always being supplied.

• Now a habit of language, so remarkable as this, cannot be regarded as accidental. It must mean something very specific, and I think the meaning clearly is, that in all subjective uses of the Holy Spirit reference is made to Spirit as an element, or as essence, and that for the time being the personality of Spirit is distinctly suppressed in order

to make the indwelling of Holy Spirit a thinkable reality. With this idea before us it is not difficult to understand Paul's statement to the Corinthians when he says that in one Spirit were they all baptized into one body.

It is probable that some theologians have overdone the personality of the Holy Spirit. No doubt the personality of the Spirit is distinctly revealed, and when used as the Scriptures use it, this personality must be unhesitatingly affirmed. But it ought to be remembered that the word "person" or "personality" is never used in the Scriptures with respect to the Holy Spirit; and as we have already seen, the definite article is very frequently suppressed, for the purpose, as I have already indicated, of giving emphasis to the Holy Spirit *in esse*, we certainly have a Scriptural warrant for not placing too much emphasis upon what has been called the personality of the Holy Spirit. It should also be remembered that the word "person," when applied to the Holy Spirit does not necessarily mean the same thing as when it is applied to ourselves, but simply denotes a certain distinction which we think the word properly expresses. Of course our idea of personality is formed wholly out of our conception of what we are ourselves. But this conception may very poorly express what the Scriptures teach with regard to the Holy Spirit.

It is also an interesting fact, and somewhat suggestive at this particular point of our investigation, that the predominant gender of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures is neuter. It is not necessary to magnify this habit of the inspired writers, since it is well known that the Greek gender does not run parallel with the gender of the English. Nevertheless, if it was the intention of the writers of the New Testament to emphasize the personality of the Holy Spirit, it is certainly very remarkable that they should have selected a word which is neuter in gender rather than one that is

masculine. The word "*parakleetos*" is masculine, but this is used only by the Apostle John.

It is also very suggestive that the exact equivalent of the New Testament phrase "*To Hagion Pneuma*," is found only three times in the old Testament. The Hebrew style, for the most part, is "The Spirit of God," or "My Spirit," and not "The Holy Spirit, while in all cases the predominant gender is feminine; and as there is no neuter gender in the Hebrew language, many of its feminines are properly rendered neuter genders in the English. In Gen. 1:2, the idea of "brooding" answers well to the feminine gender of *Roo-ach Elohim*—the Spirit of God. Is all this accidental? Must this predominant habit of the Hebrew language be ignored entirely in a matter of such grave importance as that under consideration? I think it is quite probable that the modern tendency to always speak of the Holy Spirit as a masculine gender is the foundation of much confusion in reference to the subject of the Holy Spirit's office and work. If we take into account the testimony of both the Old and the New Testaments it seems to me that the translation of the authorized version of the Bible is justified when it uniformly translates the Holy Spirit as a neuter rather than as a masculine gender.

Of course I do not wish the Disciples of Christ, as a body, to be responsible for any of the criticisms which I make either upon their position or upon the generally accepted views of other religious bodies. But what I have just been saying is legitimately involved in the Disciple contention, although some of their scholars and thinkers may not agree with me. However, it is one of the cardinal principles of their movement to allow the utmost freedom in the matter of interpretation, though in the main it is rather remarkable that there is very little difference among Disciples as to the interpretation of anything that is vital in

either of the Testaments.

I cannot go into this whole question at the present, but what I have said is sufficient to make it evident that much of the teaching of theologians with respect to the Holy Spirit has had little or no foundation in the word of God. Modern, popular revivalism has its origin and inspiration largely in misconceptions of the office and work of the Holy Spirit.

As already intimated, Disciple teachers have not generally made their position entirely clear with regard to the office and work of the Holy Spirit and certainly not entirely satisfactory in every respect. However, in the main, they have distinctly emphasized the fact that the work of the Holy Spirit must be freed from the superstitions which have gathered about it and which have so often discounted the work entirely, because of the unreasonableness of the contention of those who misinterpret the Scriptures regarding the Holy Spirit's office.

With respect to spiritual operations, Disciple teachers have very generally insisted upon limiting the Holy Spirit's work to that sphere where co-operation with the Word of God is distinctly marked out. Possibly they have pressed this point sometimes too strongly, and for the reason that in our present fleshly state we can know very little about spiritual operations, and therefore it is perhaps better not to attempt to limit that which is probably limitless in its sphere of influence. Nevertheless, it is wise to avoid rushing into a boundless ocean of darkness, where only ignorance and superstition are the controlling influences. We are never safe unless we can quote for our religious position a "Thus saith the Lord," and we are never in danger as long as we can say with distinct emphasis, "it is written." This was the safeguard of our Divine Lord when the tempter sought to lead him astray. He met every assault of Satan with

the terse and emphatic saying, "it is written." This with Christ was the end of all controversy, and while we are following his example in this regard, we need not be concerned even though ten thousand superstitions should be hurled at us.

Disciples have always believed and taught that we are now practically under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Christ has personally ascended into the heavens, and he has sent the Holy Spirit to take his place here, to advocate his cause, to dwell in his church, and to make intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. At the same time Disciples have clearly marked the difference between the Holy Spirit as an *agent* and Holy Spirit indwelling the Christian, though they have never, so far as I know, made the argument for this distinction, as I have just done, by showing that the article in the Greek is always before Holy Spirit when reference is made to the agency of the Spirit, or to its objective relationship, and never before it, when reference is made to Spirit as an element, or when it is subjectively used. From the point of view I have considered the matter, the Disciple's contention, that we must distinguish between the Holy Spirit operating in conversion and Holy Spirit dwelling in the Christian, is not only eminently intelligible, but becomes at once overwhelmingly supported by every passage of Scripture in the Word of God where the word "Spirit" is used.

V. A true conception of man. In an important sense *man* must be the starting point with all our investigations. Self-consciousness is doubtless the first concept with which we become acquainted. We cannot reason about God at all until we have learned to reason about ourselves, nor can we know anything of the *Divine* except we rise up to this knowledge through the *human*. This is one reason why God was manifest in the flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. In our re-creation it was neces-

sary that God should come down to us, should assume our humanity, and thus bring himself nearer to us, in order that we might understand him at all. Consequently, under the Christian dispensation, at least, we can approach God only through the man Christ Jesus, for it is only by knowing him that we can know the Father.

Just here the Christian world has gone much astray in its reasoning. Many theologians formulate their anthropology by their theology, while it is evident that they ought to reverse this whole process by studying theology through anthropology. Chronologically considered, man necessarily comes first in all our reasoning. As I have already suggested, man comes first in consciousness, and it is only through familiarity with ourselves that we can possibly apprehend God in either his personality or his essence. Of course we cannot comprehend him, even though we were able to comprehend everything else in the universe. God is outside of his universe, and yet he is in it all. He is independent of everything he has created, but he touches every part of this creation, and is the life of everything. He is *in* all his works but not *of* them. He is, therefore, both immanent and transcendent. By him we live, move and have our being.

Man is a little lower than God, as the Psalmist declares, and it is this very fact that makes it necessary for us to deal with him in our conceptions before we can possibly rise up to God. This being true, it is easily seen how necessary it is to have a true conception of man. Indeed, I believe it is impossible for any one to formulate a true theology without first realizing a true anthropology.

Now, Disciples of Christ have never troubled themselves with certain theories concerning the origin of man. Many of them do not know, perhaps, the meaning of the terms Creationism, Traducianism, and Evolutionism. They may know the mean-

ing of these words according to the definition in our dictionaries, but very few probably have ever investigated thoroughly the controversies that have raged around these terms. Nor is it necessary that any one should possess this particular knowledge. It is much more to the point that *man* should be understood as to what he really *is* than to speculate as regards his origin. In studying man as he is, it is all-important that we should have a clearly defined psychology. But it is probably not absolutely essential that we should begin our psychology by regarding man as composed of body, soul, and spirit, though this is undoubtedly the New Testament division. But we may contend for a dichotomy which really embraces a trichotomy; but certainly for the sake of clearness of statement, comprehensiveness, and more especially for the sake of a scriptural style, we ought to contend for the division which the Apostle Paul particularly emphasizes in his letter to the Thessalonians, where he prays God that the spirit, soul, and body may be preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I believe it is a fact that the Disciples, from the beginning of their movement, have been generally trichotomists, and have therefore contended for a scriptural style, as respects the threefold nature of man, as well as for a scriptural style with respect to other things. They have insisted on the fact that where the Scriptures speak we must speak, and where they are silent we must be silent.

But the main points for which Disciples have contended have been at least three:

(1) Man's absolute need of a Divine revelation. They have contended that man has not only lost the true image of God, but that he is now incapable of restoring that image without Divine help, and that this help must necessarily come to him through a revelation, for this is the only way that such help can come as will, at the same time, honor both

God and man. Man has eyes to see, ears to hear, and has a heart to feel; and consequently he must be addressed through his eyes, ears and feelings in order that he may be influenced without violating the very constitution of his being, and consequently this influence can be exerted in no way without such a revelation as God has given to him.

The particular thing, with respect to this matter, which Disciples have emphasized, is the ability of man to understand and accept the revelation which God has made. They have recognized the scriptural doctrine that man is dead in trespasses and in sins, but they have repudiated the notion that what the Scriptures mean by this statement is that man is *so* dead that he cannot see, hear or believe. They have always recognized the fact that man has fallen from his first estate; that he is, indeed, without God and without hope in the world; and, furthermore, that he is utterly incapable of returning to God without the very help which God offers him in the revelation which has been made; but that, with this revelation, he can and ought to turn to God and accept the terms of salvation by which he may be saved.

It has always been claimed that any other view of anthropology dishonors both God and man, and is clearly contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures which everywhere assumes that man is capable of hearing, believing, and obeying the Gospel, without any extra influence, and consequently this very fact emphasizes immensely the responsibility of man to do what God has commanded him to do with respect to salvation.

(2) Disciples have always maintained with vigor the notion of the freedom of the will or that man is a free agent, and consequently a free agent with respect to his conduct. They have held that in no other way can man's responsibility be distinctly affirmed. He is either responsible for his conduct, or he is not; if he is not, then all the ap-

peals made to him in the Scriptures are practically in vain, for if man is not free to choose for himself what he will do in any given case, then it is impossible, in the very nature of things, to hold him responsible for the doing, whether it be good or evil. Consequently the freedom of the will is fundamental in every thing involved in the contention of the Disciples. Indeed, so prominent is this fact, in both their anthropology and theology, that any surrender of it or any compromise with respect to it, must be regarded as vitally affecting the whole plea for which they contend. If man is an automaton, acting only as he is acted upon, then their whole advocacy is a mistake; but if he is a free agent and can, therefore, accept or reject the message which God has sent to him, then the plea of the Disciples, with respect to salvation, becomes at once intelligible, and at the same time accounts largely for their marvelous success in winning souls to Christ.

Nor are they in the slightest degree troubled by what some imagine legitimately follows from the nature of their anthropology. Some suppose that the doctrine of free agency, as contended for by the Disciples, takes the glory away from God and gives it to man himself. But surely this does not follow.

Let us suppose two cases: Let us suppose, in the first place, that man is a mere machine. He has no power to act for himself in spiritual things. He is a mere Jack in the box and can act only when the strings are pulled to give him motion. Now he is acted upon by an *irresistibilis Gratia*, or an irresistible force, without which he cannot possibly be saved. Does the salvation of this machine honor God?

Take another case: Man is created in the image of God. He has placed before him good and evil. He has the ability to choose. He chooses the evil and falls. But God does not leave him entirely to

his folly. He follows him with his love. He sends his son to redeem him. A plan of salvation is provided in harmony with man's condition. The Gospel message is adapted to man as he is. It is proclaimed for man's hearing, belief and obedience. Man can hear, can believe, can obey. All this he does, and is made to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Now which of these cases honors God the more? It seems to me that no one can fail to see that the case wherein God adapts his Gospel to the man whom he has created, but who has gone astray, honors God vastly more than any scheme of salvation which practically compels man, *nolens, volens*, to be saved simply because the Creator really forces his salvation.

It may be that these illustrations put the matter rather strongly, but, after all, they deal with it from a practical point of view precisely as it is.

(3) Disciples have always taught that every man is not only responsible for his own salvation, so far as the privilege of choosing is concerned, but that every saved man is also responsible for the salvation of every other man, so far as it lies in the power of each individual to contribute to the salvation of the world. Herein is their main starting point in the advocacy of missions. In the beginning of their movement, they were chiefly occupied in building up Churches at home, because they believed that this was the first thing necessary in order to the conquest of the world. But at the psychological moment they began the work of foreign missions, and nothing has accentuated this work more than the conception of man which they have insisted upon from the beginning of their movement to the present time. The result of their advocacy of foreign missions has already commanded the admiration of other religious bodies, and has perhaps astonished the Disciples themselves in view of their marvelous success. As yet, they have not fully realized the responsibility which rests upon them in

view of the noble conception of man which they have advocated, and which is such a potent influence in bringing victory to their banners.

The anthropology of the Disciples recognizes the true idea of Evolution, viz., that all progress, at certain stages, must be reinforced from above or else there can be no real forward movement. It is a fact which no one who is competent to judge will attempt to deny that the mineral kingdom cannot advance beyond its own borders until the vegetable kingdom comes down and appropriates it and carries it over the barrier which separates it from the vegetable. Nor can the vegetable advance to the animal of its own strength. The animal must come down to the vegetable and by appropriation carry the latter above its own limitations. The same is true of the animal. It can never rise to the spiritual until the latter comes down and lifts it over the line which bounds the animal.

Now it cannot be doubted that this fact lays heavy responsibilities upon spiritual men or Christians for it clearly suggests that the heathen world cannot be saved by any law known to us, unless spiritual men shall go down to these animal men, and by the Gospel of God's grace help them to step over the line which now separates them from those who have been born from above. It is not, therefore, a question of God's willingness to save the heathen without the Gospel and the help of Christians, but it is rather a question of His *power* to save them, however anxious he may be to do so; and unless he deals with them by some law unknown to either science or religion, it really seems impossible for Him to save them except through the instrumentality of spiritual men who must go down after them with the Gospel and bring them up to the spiritual sphere. Foreign missions are therefore a necessary expedient in order to the conversion of the world, and from the Disciple point

of view these missions are as scientific as they are scriptural, for the Disciple anthropology makes no demands upon our faith which are not sustained by every well-authenticated fact of science as well as religion.

It is scarcely necessary to intimate a single caution with respect to the anthropology of the Disciples. It is not intended by anything that has been said to affirm that the Disciples are the only religious people who teach substantially the conception of man as set forth in the foregoing considerations. But it is affirmed with emphasis that no other religious people have made this conception of man so vastly important in the salvation of the world as have the Disciples of Christ.

VI. A true conception of the gospel. Speaking broadly, it is not too much to say that after the Apostasy had fully begun, and prior to the inauguration of the Disciple movement, no specific Gospel message was preached at all, unless in very exceptional cases. Almost everything else was preached; but the Gospel as a definite, loving message was seldom if ever proclaimed at the beginning of the Disciple movement. Whatever would help to support the proclaimer's special religious views, or "doctrines," as these were usually called, or whatever would excite the emotional nature and move men to accept these doctrines, as expressing the way of life and salvation, were earnestly announced and vigorously maintained from nearly all the pulpits of the land.

It was, therefore, practically a new revelation when the people were told that doctrines could not save, that these doctrines were divisive in their tendency, and in the end disastrous to the unity of Christians and unfruitful in the development of the Christian life. It was equally a startling revelation when it was announced that the Gospel itself is a distinctly specific, well-defined message, which in its comprehensive import includes facts,

commands, and promises; facts to be believed, commands to be obeyed, promises to be enjoyed. The specific facts are the death of Christ for our sins according to the Scriptures, his burial, and his resurrection the third day according to the Scriptures. The specific commands, included in the Gospel message, are to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all the heart, to repent or to turn away from sin, and then to manifest this faith and repentance in an overt act of obedience, by being baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The *facts* of the Gospel, of course, must be regarded as fundamental. Without the death of Christ for our sins, according to the Scriptures, there could really be no Gospel preached. The Disciples did not stop to formulate a distinct philosophy of Christ's death, or the atonement, but they did insist upon the fact of his death as fundamental in the Gospel message, with an earnestness which has seldom been equalled, and perhaps never excelled. They have always been willing for men to formulate any philosophical view of the atonement that might best satisfy themselves, provided always the Scriptural statement that he "died for our sins" shall not be robbed of its unmistakable content. As to *why* he died for our sins, or as to *how* his death satisfied the conditions of the case, etc., they have never attempted to settle with definite certainty. They have always believed that these deep things belong to God, and they have left them without attempting any speculative explanation, such as should be in any sense an article of faith.

They have treated the other facts of the Gospel in precisely the same way. Every man is left free to accept any philosophy with respect to these facts he may choose, provided always that his explanation does not necessarily destroy the facts themselves.

The *commands* of the Gospel have been treated

in very much the same way. No philosophy of faith has been formulated for the acceptance of any one. Every thinker has been left entirely free with respect to the philosophy of faith. The only thing required of him is that he shall believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Even the content of this great proposition has been left where the Scriptures leave it. It may be, and most probably is a fact, that differences exist among Disciples as to the exact meaning of this great proposition; but Disciples have never thought well to make these differences, if any do exist, a barrier to Christian fellowship. When a penitent believer confesses with his mouth the Lord Jesus and affirms that he believes in his heart that God has raised him from the dead, this is an end of all controversy, for this of itself is sufficient evidence that the candidate has a right to the ordinance of baptism.

This contention of the Disciple movement makes faith *Christo-centric*. It immediately turns the sinner's attention to him of whom Moses and the prophets did write. It leaves no ground for sights and sounds, for superstitious incantations, or hypnotic states of the mind or soul, such as were common in the religious experiences at the beginning of the last century. When a man says that he believes with all his heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, this all-embracing confession is accepted everywhere among Disciples as sufficient, so far as faith goes, in order to salvation. As already intimated, it turns the mind away from mere human expedients and doubtful philosophies to him who is the foundation of the Church, as well as the inspiration and vital force of everything that belongs to the faith.

With Disciples there could be no Gospel message that did not in some way rest upon and proceed from Christ Jesus our Lord. Hence, faith in him and obedience to his commandments must

be regarded as the only conditions of membership in the Church of Christ, and therefore the only conditions of fellowship among the followers of Christ. With them the terms of fellowship are precisely equal to the terms of membership in the Church.

Equally important has been the Disciple contention with regard to repentance. They have, from the very beginning, distinguished between true repentance and what has been practically little short of penance. In the religious experience of the Protestant Churches, to say nothing of the Roman Catholics, expedients are introduced which practically vitiate the atonement; but Disciples have repudiated the idea that the sinner can propitiate God by a long agony of soul, no matter how intense that agony may be. Christ is our propitiatory sacrifice. Whatever obstacle there may have been in the way of the sinner's return to God, from the point of view of the law, that obstacle has been removed by the death of Christ for our sins according to the Scriptures, and consequently now the mission of the preacher of the Gospel is to urge the sinner to be reconciled to God, and not to propitiate God so that he will be reconciled to the sinner. God is both willing and anxious to save the sinner, and Christ's death has made it possible for God to be just and at the same time the justifier of him who believes in Jesus; and consequently the sinner need not agonize a moment with the view of securing the favor of God, but the thing for him to do is to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and he shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and this should be done without delay; even the same day or the same hour of the night he may be added to the Church, if he will gladly receive the truth and do what the Holy Spirit commands.

This brings us to the question of *baptism*, con-

cerning which the Disciple movement has precipitated very generally a vigorous and persistent controversy. This controversy has raged perhaps equally around the action, subject, and design of baptism, or, in other words as to what baptism is, for whom it is intended, and what is its significance.

In discussing these three different aspects of baptism, the aim of the Disciples has been to stick closely to the Scriptures. They have contended earnestly for the unmistakable meaning of the Greek word *baptizo*, as well as the general trend of Scriptural precept and example, in order to settle the question as to what baptism really is; and when all the facts are taken into account, they have reached the conclusion that the baptism which Jesus commanded and which his inspired Apostles everywhere practiced, is an immersion in water into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

They have also contended that this baptism should be administered only to those who are penitent believers, and that therefore infant baptism, to use the language of Martin Luther, "cannot be proved by the sacred Scriptures, or that it was instituted by Christ, or begun by the first Christians after the Apostles."

Perhaps the bitterest controversy, with respect to baptism, which the Disciple movement precipitated, has been that which arises out of their views concerning the design of baptism, or what baptism is for. They have been content to simply quote the Scriptures on this subject, and leave the matter where the Scriptures leave it. But when their religious neighbors have tried to fasten upon them the dogma of baptismal regeneration, Disciples have not hesitated to show that their religious neighbors are precisely the persons who practically teach the dogma to which objection is made. The very fact that Disciples everywhere insist up-

on both faith and repentance, *before* baptism is of any value whatever, ought to shield them from the charge of holding to the dogma of baptismal regeneration; for if regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit, as most of the Protestant Churches affirm, then when the sinner believes and repents his regeneration is already effected, and consequently Disciples cannot be justly charged with administering baptism *in order to* regeneration, since this regeneration must take place before baptism, if baptism is administered to only penitent believers.

However, the case is very different with those who administer baptism before there is any exercise of faith or repentance whatever on the part of the subjects. If any body is justly chargeable with holding to the dogma of baptismal regeneration it is surely not the Disciples, but those Churches which practice infant baptism; and this view is emphasized from the fact that the notion of baptismal regeneration was undoubtedly that which originated infant baptism, as all Church history abundantly proves.

It is true that Disciples have very generally associated baptism and the remissions of sins, but they have done this because the Scriptures evidently join them together, and consequently it is believed that what God has joined together no man should put asunder. Disciples do not teach, they never did teach that baptism *procures* remission of sins. [They teach that the blood of Christ, and this alone washes away sin,] and consequently this blood is the procuring cause of our salvation; but Disciples regard baptism, to use the language of logic, as simply the *occasion* of the remission of sins. To illustrate what I mean, I may say that the *cause* of the loud explosion in a gun is not simply the pulling of the trigger. This pulling of the trigger is the last apparent cause or *occasion* of the explosion. There are numerous other

things that are antecedent to the pulling of the trigger, and that are absolutely essential before the explosion can take place. Among these antecedents may be mentioned the quality of the powder, the form of the gun barrel, the proper arrangement of the percussion cap and powder, the existence of a surrounding atmosphere, etc., etc. Any of these conditions being absent the loud report of the gun might not have occurred.

Now there must be the proper antecedents of baptism, such as the blood of Christ, faith, repentance, etc., etc., before baptism itself can be worth anything whatever. But when these antecedents exist, then baptism is the *occasion*, or to use the figure already introduced in the case of the gun, baptism is the trigger which when pulled brings into active exercise the efficient causes which are essential to salvation.

A failure to distinguish between things that essentially differ, and yet are necessarily combined in the whole scheme of redemption, has produced endless confusion in the Christian world, and has led many honest persons to believe that the Disciple view of the design of baptism is open to grave objection because it seems to make baptism an efficient cause of salvation rather than the *occasion* by which salvation is realized through the efficient causes which lie back of it, and without which baptism is worth nothing whatever. A little attention to the rules of logic might help to a clear understanding with respect to a matter, the importance of which can scarcely be overestimated.

VII. The true conception of the Church. The Disciple movement has done much to put the Church in its right attitude. During the Middle Ages the Church practically became almost everything, while religion amounted to very little. In the beginning of the nineteenth century the difference between a Church and a religion was very dimly seen, if seen at all, by even a major-

ity of Protestants; and yet, the distinction between these is of the very greatest importance. A splendid ideal for a Church may be a very poor ideal for a religion. The Roman Catholic Church has a magnificent ecclesiasticism which really eclipses all other religious organizations, but we are accustomed to think that its realization of religion is far from what it ought to be.

However, as a matter of fact, most men judge a religion by the Church which assumes to represent that religion; but this is beginning at the wrong end of the line. We should judge and criticize the Church through the religion rather than the religion through the Church. A Church is only valuable so far as it fitly represents the religion of Christ. That religion must be regarded as paramount, and all of our estimates with regard to a particular Church must be made through that religion rather than to judge of the religion through any Church, no matter what its claims may be.

Another distinction, almost equally important, has been insisted upon by the Disciples of Christ. They have persistently refused to confound the officers of a Church with the Church itself. With them the Church is fundamental. It may exist without any offices at all. Indeed, we do not find any deacons in the primitive Churches until we come to the sixth chapter of Acts, and no elders or bishops until we come to the eleventh chapter of Acts. Evidently officers must be regarded as only an expedient; an expedient doubtless of great value, so far as the efficiency of the Church is concerned, but an expedient nevertheless, which must never be regarded as a necessity, for the Church is not dependent upon the officers, but the officers upon the Church. The officers are for a special purpose, and this purpose is clearly set forth in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, and is as follows:

1. For the perfecting of the Saints, or for the

growth, culture and development of the members.

2. For the work of the ministry, or for preaching and serving.

3. For the edifying of the body of Christ, or the building up of the Church in faith, hope, and love.

This being the comprehensive purpose of the officers of the Church it will be seen that their distinctive place and mission relate to *work* rather than *authority*, and that anything like an ecclesiasticism, such as is represented by the Roman Catholic Church and some Protestant Churches, is not even hinted at in the New Testament Scriptures. Indeed, the statement concerning officers in Ephesians clearly indicates that these officers were not only an expedient, but also a *temporary* expedient; they are to serve for a time to be determined by the fact of "all coming in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Consequently it is evident that official position in the Church is simply to meet certain important conditions till the Church is able by unity, strength and co-operation of all the members to make "Increase of the body into the edifying of itself in love."

It is not difficult to see from these premises that entirely too much has been made of what is called Church organization. While no such term is anywhere to be found in the Bible, this term has furnished the ground for many of the divisions which now disgrace the map of Christendom. From the very beginning of their movement Disciples have emphasized the fact that the Church should be regarded as a *family* rather than as an ecclesiastical organization. Indeed, many of their ablest writers have distinguished sharply between the Church and the Kingdom, the latter being much more comprehensive than the former, embracing as it does the whole area of Christ's mediatorial reign, while

the former embraces simply those who have been called out, and separated into a family, where they are God's children in a special sense, and where as such they are brethren. This is the ideal of the Church set forth in the New Testament, and this is what the Disciple movement would have the Christian world thoroughly realize.

Another distinguishing characteristic of the New Testament Church has been very strongly emphasized from the beginning of our religious movement, viz., that the Church has no earthly priesthood separate from its own membership. In a certain sense all the members of the Church are priests, and these constitute a spiritual priesthood as distinguished from the priesthood which belonged to the Jewish institution. Christ himself was never actually a priest while on earth. It was only after his ascension that he became a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Sacerdotalism, as it is known in ecclesiastical history, has been, from the very beginning of their movement to the present time utterly repudiated by Disciples of Christ. The third Epistle of Peter, published by Mr. Campbell in *The Christian Baptist*, sounded the keynote of the movement with respect to arrogant assumptions of the clergy. This Epistle perhaps did injustice to some of the clergy existing at that time; but there can be no doubt about the fact that Mr. Campbell was striking at a great prevailing evil, and though he may have overdrawn the picture somewhat, it is unquestionably true that nothing perhaps has done more to hinder the progress of Christianity in the world than the spirit of the clergy which was vividly portrayed in this third Epistle of Peter. The ministry of our Christian Churches would do well to study this Epistle very carefully at the present time, for unless I am greatly mistaken in the signs of the times, I see the shadow of a domineering clergy arising in certain quarters in the beginning of this twentieth century.

If we generalize the New Testament Church, for which the Disciples have always contended, at least three distinct characteristics come into view:

- (1) Its Universality.
- (2) Its Spirituality.
- (3) Its Oneness.

The Gospel message is essentially ecumenical. It was to be carried into all the world and preached to every creature. This fact gives us the true standpoint from which to study the catholicity of the New Testament Church. Count Tolstoi is perhaps not right in all his teaching, but he is not far wrong when he ascribes to patriotism nearly all the evils of our modern civilization. He thinks that we do things in the name of patriotism, which is only another name for selfishness and unbrotherliness, and these cannot possibly be justified from the Christian point of view.

Now, whether Tolstoi is right or wrong, it is evidently true that Christianity contemplates a universal brotherhood, a divine-human family, where the boundary lines of nations are no longer regarded, but where in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of God.

A second characteristic of the New Testament Church is Spirituality. There is no distinction in the New Testament more sharply drawn or more constantly insisted upon than that between flesh and spirit. Everywhere the members of Christ's body are declared to be Spiritual, born from above, and are built up "a Spiritual house, a Holy priesthood, to offer up Spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." This conception of the Church does not now occupy the important place it once did; at least it is not now emphasized as it was in the days of the Apostles. Nevertheless, I feel confident that Christian union is an impossible thing unless we first have real *Christians* with which to form that union. But real Christians are not such, simply because their fathers and mothers

were Christians; nor does residence in a particular territory determine Church membership. What is needed is a thoroughly converted membership, men and women who are new creations in Christ Jesus, and with whom old things have passed away, and all things have become new. In short, there must be a birth from above before it is possible to have the Divine life below; and this spiritual conception of the Church must be insisted upon everywhere if we expect Christians to become anything more than a merely organized socialism with little else in it than that which contributes to the gratification of the flesh.

The third characteristic, viz., Oneness, is also very important. Disciples have not always distinguished sharply between Christian Unity, and Christian Union, but they have most earnestly contended for both. However, this distinction is clearly made in the New Testament, and ought to be insisted upon in all our advocacy. Unity is a Divine gift; Union a human expedient. We cannot create oneness or unity of the spirit, but we may "endeavor to keep" it. Union is the legitimate outcome of unity. Probably the chief difficulty in effecting Christian union is in the fact that there is too little Christian unity out of which this union can come. Christian union presupposes the existence of actual Christians, who have been made one in Christ as he and the Father are one, and then out of this oneness union ought to follow as effect follows cause. But if we do not "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," we cannot possibly have Christian union no matter what our start may have been. A good beginning may have a bad ending, though a bad beginning never did and never will *make* a good ending.

This oneness of the Church is so emphatically proclaimed that the Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, declares that in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free,

neither male nor female; for all are one in Him. Now whatever else this oneness may mean it certainly does not mean those miserable, social, and conventional distinctions of the present day which are so predominant in much of our Church life.

Just here, if I mistake not, we touch one of the most vital questions of our Church union problem. It may be that many doctrinal differences will have to be broken down before we can realize our union ideal; but, in my opinion, the first and most important difficulties in our way lie on the practical side of Christianity rather than on the doctrinal side. When we have ceased to hinder the fullest development of spiritual oneness, by refusing any longer to recognize in our Churches the distinction between Jew and Greek, bond and free, male and female, we shall then begin at least to realize the New Testament ideal of the Church in which racial unity, social unity, and family unity, are all practically assured. And it is not difficult to see that, when this oneness is clearly manifested in our Churches, the problem of either Christian union or Church union can be easily solved. Consequently, it is my firm conviction that the real obstacles with which we shall have to contend are not so much doctrinal differences, the "historic episcopate," or any other kind of episcopate, as racial distinctions, national boundary lines, traditional customs, the reign of caste, and the unworthy, ungallant, and unscriptural insistence that woman must occupy a very subordinate place in the Church. And it is furthermore my deep conviction that all efforts to realize a Christian union that would be of much permanent benefit will ultimately end in complete failure unless the practical obstacles to which I have called attention are effectually removed out of the way.

Of course there are other things relating to the Church which might be mentioned, and which the Disciples have specially emphasized, but as I am

aiming to consider their religious position from a comprehensive point of view rather than from the view of special details, I deem it unnecessary to occupy attention any further with respect to their conception of the Church. However, enough has been said to show that their conception of the Church, in many respects, is essentially different from that which is held by many other religious bodies; and it is believed that their conception is not only Scriptural but is really the only one which can be made practicable for all the purposes for which the Church exists; and consequently, their conception of the Church is the only one that can possibly become efficient in bringing all the discordant elements of Christendom into practical unity.

PART II.

IS THE PLEA OF THE DISCIPLES NEEDED AT THE PRESENT TIME?

Has the Disciple movement accomplished its purpose? Undoubtedly there are those who believe that it has. They are willing to concede that there was a great need for it when it was first inaugurated; for the religious world at that time was in such a state of confusion that a call to come back to Apostolic faith and practice was a necessity; and consequently the plea for the Bible and the Bible alone, as a rule of faith and practice, with all the other elements entering into the Plea, to which attention has been called, was perhaps an essential condition to lead the Christian world out of the apostasy into which it had completely fallen, during the Middle Ages; but that now there is no special reason for a distinct plea, such as the Disciples set forth, since most of the Protestant Churches are no longer in Babylon and consequently do not need the help of such a movement as that represented by the Disciples of Christ.

It is wisdom to consider very carefully whether this contention is well founded or not. There can be no doubt about the fact that it has some currency, even among Disciples themselves.

Now, if what is meant by a "disappearing brotherhood" is the union of Christians, so that all division lines shall be broken down, and all shall stand together upon the one foundation of Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, then there ought to be no objection to the disappearance of a separate Disciple Brotherhood, for it would then become absorbed in an aggregation of Christians which would repre-

sent the New Testament Church, the very thing for which the Disciples have earnestly pleaded from the beginning of their movement. But I am far from believing that we have reached any such millennial period as is indicated in this program. The jarring of rival sects is still heard on every hand, and the clashing of theological dogmas still continues. Doubtless the bitterness of old controversies has lost some of its intensity in the modern spirit, but the *form* of opposing sects is still very much in evidence. It is also true that many of the old dogmas have been either abandoned or else greatly modified during the past century, but these have never been repudiated by any overt act, and consequently the "dead hand" continues to be an important factor in denominational life. Historically considered, it is certainly true that the Christianity of the present day is not precisely what it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it is yet far from properly representing that splendid ideal of the Christianity of Christ, as this is found in the New Testament Scriptures. There is, therefore, still great need for the Plea of the Christian Church or Disciples of Christ, for there is still much work to be done before the principles and aims of the Disciples can be realized in the practical development of Christianity in the world. We must not mistake a certain kind of platform union for the real thing. Union is in the air, but it has not yet reached the solid earth.

I will now endeavor to indicate, as briefly as possible, why the Disciple Plea is still needed, as a distinct factor in the religious development of the twentieth century.

I. The Plea lends itself easily to a harmony with the scientific, critical and practical demands of the age. Let no one misunderstand me at this point. I have no more sympathy with scientific speculations than I have with theological specula-

tions; nor have I any special fondness for hyper-criticism, whether this be called higher criticism or lower criticism. However, there is a *real* science and a *real* criticism which must be reckoned with by any religious plea that can command the respect of the educated classes of the present age; and it must not be forgotten that the educated classes of the present age are not only the dominant classes but are rapidly becoming the popular classes. The time was when educated men belonged to an insignificant minority. But this is the case no longer. With our public school system, running from the primary to and through the University, we have come to a period where there is little or no excuse for any one's failure to secure an education. Indeed, it will not be long until the uneducated man will be the exception, as the educated man was at the beginning of our religious movement. The times have evidently changed, and consequently we must, to some extent, change with them. Certainly the demands of the present age are such as to compel a recognition of every reasonable demand which education makes, and consequently no religious movement can claim any right to exist which does not easily lend itself to harmony with the scientific, critical and practical demands of the age.

However, we must distinguish clearly between science, falsely so-called, and the *real* thing. The latter has no conflict with any truthful representation of the Christianity of Christ. Disciples have always been careful to sharply distinguish between a false science and a false Christianity. Probably they have not paid as much attention to a genuine science as they might have done. Possibly they have not always been wise in their advocacy of what they have understood to be the Christianity of Christ. They have contended with great earnestness that, in many instances, what is called Christianity has been substituted for Christ Himself; and that this substitution has most unfavor-

ably affected both the faith and life of the professed followers of Christ, while, at the same time, it has furnished a pretext for those outside the Church to remain where they are.

The word 'Christianity' is not in the Bible. Nor is it certain that what is represented by that word, in the currency of modern Christian society, can possibly be legitimately constructed out of Bible teaching. Nevertheless, it is a fact which cannot be disputed, that it is Christianity rather than Christ that is on trial to-day. The question as to Christ's position, so far as it is a matter of criticism, has been practically settled. Of course, infidels will not let the question rest entirely. They know well enough that His claims must be overthrown before their cause can be regarded as safe. They readily perceive that Christ Himself is the key to the whole controversy, and consequently their final aim is to break the spell of His personal influence. But they wisely make the attack, in the first place, on the outposts, so to speak; upon Christianity as a system and a life, seeking by this means to clear the way for their final assault, which is to be aimed at Christ Himself. They do not fail to notice the imperfections of historical Christianity. Indeed, Christians themselves cannot fail to observe what is palpable to every honest student of Church history.

All along the line of progress, from the Apostolic age to the present time, Christianity and Christ have frequently represented very different ideas; and even now they are in practical antagonism at many vital points. For instance, it is a fact which cannot be successfully denied that much of our modern Christianity is little better than Judaism; is, indeed, a mixture of Judaism and Paganism, with a small portion of the teaching of Christ.

As a proof of what I say, let it be noted that many modern Christians are altogether more concerned about keeping the requirements of the law

than the requirements of the Gospel; more interested in celebrating heathen feasts and customs than those commanded by Christ. Moses, not Christ, is practically the almost supreme authority in many portions of modern Christendom; and this fact, taken in connection with the divisions, strifes, worldly-mindedness, and constant neglect to observe some of the plainest teachings of the New Testament, makes it evident that what is called Christianity, as it is illustrated in the Churches of the present day, is but a feeble representation of that wonderful life and character described in the New Testament; and yet, "he that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also to walk even as He walked." (I John 11 : 6).

I have already intimated that Christ Himself is no longer on trial. Neither is the Word of God, in any real sense, seriously on trial. But our modern Christianity is on trial. This is what we are practically defending against the assaults of the skepticism of the day. Shall we be able to triumph in this encounter? I fear not. Just here is the weakness of modern apologetics. Christ Himself needs no special defense, neither is the Word of God in any great danger. Both of these can stand against the most determined and most profane criticism. But modern Christianity is extremely weak. On every side it is open to successful opposition. Yet Christians think it must be defended.

But why not change our tactics? I do not doubt that Christians have it in their power to make a splendid strategic movement against modern doubt. Let them surrender at once the untenable ground they have been striving to hold, and (speaking after the manner of military men) let them fall back on the main position. Let them get back to Christ and His Apostles, or what is better, perhaps, let them go forward to these, and then there will be little difficulty in defeating the most determined attacks of the enemy. But as long as the defense

is made from our weak and contradictory theologies, or from our weaker churches, it is simply certain that infidelity, in its various forms, will gain many signal triumphs. While Christians are bound in some way to defend the teaching of human creeds, or the half-hearted Church life of the present day, there is little or no hope that much progress will be made in breaking the power of modern skepticism. But the moment these insecure positions are given up, and a brave stand made at the real citadel of our faith, that moment will the hosts of Satan find themselves practically defeated.

In opposing Christ to Christianity, I do not wish to be misunderstood. While the word "Christianity" is not in the Bible, I do not deny that what the word properly implies is in the Bible. Doubtless it would have been well if the word had never been used, for it has certainly been greatly abused. Even when something of the system which Christ taught has been clearly understood, it has often happened that Christ himself has been overshadowed by the system. But as a matter of fact the system has little prominence in the New Testament. In that Christ is everything; in modern Christianity he has, at best, only a secondary place. The Church and doctrines are now frequently put to the front. These are regarded as indispensable, while Christ is kept largely in the background to witness those who profess to follow him waste their energies and opportunities in endless strifes about that which is of little or no importance.

Now if it be true that the New Testament makes little of objective Christianity, considered as a system, surely the elaborate systems of modern Christendom are very much out of proportion; and this perversion of the true order of things is immeasurably augmented when it is understood that the modern systems are, for the most part, perversions of New Testament teaching. Any candid student will at once be struck with the comparative small

importance which the Church, as an organization, seems to occupy in the New Testament. It is there undoubtedly, but it is there in a very subordinate sense. In these days it challenges the chief consideration. With many the question is no longer asked, what does the Master say? But what does the Church say? Of course there are limitations to be applied when the case is put as I have put it. Still, it cannot be denied that my general statement is true. Christ's authority may be theoretically recognized, but practically the Church is supreme in everything that relates to faith and practice. Hence it will be seen that Christianity has virtually usurped the place of Christ, and as a consequence it cannot be longer defended without largely giving up all hope that Christ himself shall conquer the world. Nevertheless Christ, in his own great personality, is the only hope of perishing men. Let his reign be supreme in all hearts, and then Christianity may safely be left to take care of itself.

Now it may not be possible to harmonize what is *called* Christianity with what is *real* science, but it is possible to harmonize Christ and his teaching with every thing that a genuine science demands. This much has always been claimed by the Disciples of Christ; and when the different elements of their Plea are tested by the most rigid demands of science, it will be found that they contend for nothing which is not in harmony with every claim which science can legitimately make.

This fact undoubtedly makes the Plea of the Disciples an important factor in the religious development of the twentieth century. We have already seen that our educational advancement calls for a religion, or a presentation of religion, that is rational, or at least is not irrational. It is not possible any longer to make progress with a religious advocacy which is supported chiefly by an appeal to ignorance. The Disciple view of the Scriptures, of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit,

of man, of the Gospel, and of the Church, is eminently a reasonable view, and consequently may be easily harmonized with every sensible demand of science or criticism; and consequently the Disciple plea must necessarily fill an important place in the coming centuries.

In saying this I do not mean that they are the only religious people whose plea is worthy of consideration. Other religious movements are distinguished for certain great principles, and for accomplishing great results, but I cannot help believing that the Disciple Plea is the only one which covers completely the whole ground with respect to a possible harmony with the scientific, critical and practical demands of the age.

II. *The Plea furnishes a common, reasonable and workable ground for Christian union.* Disciples have not always clearly distinguished between *Christian Unity* and *Christian Union*. They have from the very beginning of their movement urgently contended for both; but, as has already been intimated, they have sometimes fallen into the error, which is a common one with those who write or speak on the subject, of confounding two very important things that are essentially different. However, in their case the failure to distinguish between the two has never caused them to cease to advocate with almost extreme earnestness the demolition of all division lines between those who are the real followers of Christ. From a critical point of view the language they have used may not have always been wisely selected, but the outcome of their advocacy and the earnestness with which they have made this advocacy have never been in doubt by those who have given sufficient attention to the matter to entitle them to form an authoritative opinion.

However, it is important always to distinguish between things that differ. Unity is the normal state of Christians, and consequently, without this

unity we cannot have a normal Christian union. We might have an artificial union, but it would probably be of short duration, and might make matters worse instead of better. It is, therefore, most important to understand the difference between Christian *unity* and Christian *union*. Unity involves similarity of structure or identity of nature, and consequently, it supposes a mutual adaptation of parts for some special and common purpose; but union is the mere joining together of two or more bodies in one, and implies a combining that is manifest; on the other hand, unity denotes an invisible oneness, and may therefore exist without any outward manifestation of it. Webster says, "*Union* is the act of bringing two or more things together so as to make but one. *Unity* is a state of simple oneness, either of essence, as the *unity* of God; or action, feeling, etc., etc., as *unity* of design or affection, etc." We must also notice the fact that union does not establish unity, nor does unity necessarily involve union, though undoubtedly Christian union ought to follow where there is Christian unity.

The distinction I have made will enable us to understand the meaning of our Lord's prayer when he prayed that his Disciples might be one as he and the Father are one. Evidently Christ was praying primarily for Christian unity, and furthermore, for a unity of a remarkable kind. He was praying for a oneness of his Disciples, similar to the oneness existing between himself and his Father. Now this oneness must be a divine work, and hence Jesus prayed to his Father to accomplish this work in the Disciples. Christian oneness must be the work of the Holy Spirit, and that is doubtless what the Apostle means in his letter to the Ephesians, when he exhorts the Ephesians to "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." They could not *make* the unity of the Spirit, but they could "*keep* it in the

bond of peace." The keeping of it in the bond of peace involves Christian union, and this is the very thing for which Christians themselves are responsible. We cannot *create* unity but we can *keep* this unity in the bonds of peace, and thereby manifest Christian union; and in this way we may show our unity to the world, and thus fulfill the whole comprehension of our Lord's prayer, so that the world will believe that he was sent of the Father.

Now from this point of view it will be seen how important it is, when considering the question of Christian union, to have *real* Christians out of which to form that union. We might consummate a sort of conglomeration of Christendom, bringing together all the present discordant elements into one body, under one government, but such a result would be wholly unworkable, and would not therefore meet the case. But if we can have Christian unity first, or that oneness of the Disciples, for which our Divine Lord prayed; or to put it into another form, if we can have real *Christians* who are to constitute the component parts of the union we are seeking to accomplish, then such a union should give great promise of permanency, and also great promise of usefulness.

I am specially anxious to be understood at this point, for the reason it will serve to explain what some have regarded as a distinct narrowness in the plea which the Disciples have made for Christian union. Some have charged them with pleading for a union, which simply means that all other religious bodies shall be absorbed by the Disciples. In other words, that their union is similar to that of the anaconda and the rabbits. The anaconda is always willing to have union with the rabbits, but the rabbits do not readily consent to the kind of union the anaconda proposes. This has been partly the difficulty with the pleading for Christian union by the Disciples. They have been supposed to occupy a position where they were willing to

have union on the principle that all the denominations should be absorbed in their Churches, and this notion has not been acceptable to the denominations.

Now a superficial view of the Disciple contention may seem to justify the point which the denominations have constantly made with respect to this matter. But a deeper and more comprehensive view will show that, after all, the Disciples are right, and for the reason that they are pleading, not for *denominational* union, but for *Christian* union. Their advocacy, when clearly understood, undoubtedly means that when all *professing* Christians shall be *real* Christians, the question of union will be at once greatly simplified; and whether a practical union can be effected or not, there must be a *oneness* of Christians before any kind of *Christian* union is at all possible.

Neither have Disciples pleaded for what is called *Church* union or ecclesiastical union; but they have stuck closely to their original contention, that the first thing to be considered is not the union, but the unity; or, to put it in other words, the only starting point that promises anything like a worthy result must be determined by asking the question, Who are *Christians*? Hence, the Disciple contention for Christian union goes back to the question of obedience to the Gospel, for only a Scriptural obedience to the Gospel can give us the Christians which are necessary in order to have a practicable and permanent Christian union.

We are now prepared to ask, Does the Disciple plea furnish a common, reasonable, and workable ground for the union of Christians? Let us briefly consider this matter in the light of the facts of the case.

What the Disciples believe and teach may be summarized as follows:

(1) The Old and New Testaments reveal the divinely inspired will of God to men, and these

Scriptures contain all that is necessary for "doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." II Timothy 3:16, 17. But the New Testament is the source of *authority* in matters specially pertaining to the Gospel and the Church.

(2) The divine excellency and worthiness of Jesus, who is the Christ, the Son of the Living God; and his official authority and glory as the Christ—the Anointed Prophet, Priest and King, who is to instruct us in the way of life, redeem us from sin and death, and reign in and over us as the rightful sovereign of our being and disposer of our destiny.

(3) The personal and perpetual mission of the Holy Spirit, to convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; and to dwell in believers as their Comforter, Helper, and Sanctifier; but all speculative *theories* as to special operations, apart from the Word of God, are rejected.

(4) The Gospel as the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. This Gospel in its fullness embraces (a) Facts; (b) Commands; (c) Promises. The facts are to be *believed*, the commands *obeyed*, and the promises *enjoyed*.

(5) The Church of Christ, a divine institution, composed of such as have turned away from sin, openly confessed Christ with the mouth, and have been baptised, thereby expressing their loyalty to him as their sovereign Lord, and by an overt act entering into covenant relationship with him, by which act they definitely decide to take up their cross and follow him. Baptism (immersion) is, therefore, not a regenerative act, nor is it simply a bodily act. It properly *follows* such a change of mind and heart as is evidenced by "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," and is the decisive step by which the penitent believer accepts Christ, and assumes the obligations of the Divine Government. It is, conse-

quently, an act in which the whole man—body, soul, and spirit—moves up “toward God.” (See 1 Peter 3:21.) This view makes neither *too much* nor *too little* of the ordinance. While on the one hand it repudiates “Baptismal Regeneration,” on the other it rescues baptism from the meaningless, formal ceremony into which it has fallen in some quarters.

(6) The fullness and freeness of the salvation offered in the Gospel to all who accept it on the terms proposed.

(7) The necessity of righteousness, holiness, and benevolence on the part of professed Christians, alike in view of their own final salvation and of their mission to turn the world to God.

From this statement it will be seen that, in the first place, the Disciple movement unquestionably furnishes a *common* ground, or a ground that is thoroughly catholic in every respect. A careful examination of the principles of the movement, to which attention has been called, will reveal the fact that there is nothing in these principles that may not be accepted by every evangelical denomination in Christendom. It may be, and no doubt is true, that these denominations contend for some things that are not included in the Disciple contention, but these are things that are not absolutely necessary in order to either Christian state or character, though they may be of considerable importance to those who advocate them. But in order to have a common ground, or a position that is entirely catholic, it is necessary that everything should be thrown overboard that is not essential in the making of Christians, and in keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Let us now briefly indicate a few points where the catholicity of the Disciples may be clearly made evident.

(1) As already seen, they hold to the Scriptures as furnishing an infallible rule of faith and

practice. Now this is common ground for all of those that are known as Evangelical denominations. These all claim to take the Scriptures as a sufficient guide for everything in religious matters, but they *add* to the Scriptures certain formulas of faith or human creeds. Now our troubles begin the moment these additions are made. We have no controversy with any of our religious neighbors as long as they are willing to take the Scriptures and the Scriptures alone as a sufficient rule of faith and practice. But the moment human creeds are added then divisions begin. Disciples say let all give up these creeds and immediately we are on the road to Christian union.

(2) Equally true is it that the Disciple position with respect to Christ is common ground upon which all can unite. While they heartily accept the Scriptural Creed, viz., Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, they, at the same time, reject all speculative views concerning him, so far as these views may be regarded as tests of Christian fellowship. Men may speculate if they will, but they must not make their speculations barriers in the way of Christian union.

(3) A common ground is also maintained as regards the office and work of the Holy Spirit. The Disciples hold strongly the position that every conversion begins and ends with the Holy Spirit, but they decline to follow those who go beyond the statements of Scripture as to *how* the Spirit operates. They contend that as long as it is simply affirmed that the Spirit operates through the truth there is no need of controversy among Christians, but the moment we begin to speculate and declare that the Spirit operates independently, or apart from the truth, in the conversion of sinners, that moment do we open the way for divisions among the people of God. Nevertheless, Disciples do not make the extra views which others may hold a barrier to fellowship with them, provided they hold

to the common ground that the Holy Spirit does operate through the truth.

(4) Disciples teach also a common ground upon which all Christians may unite in evangelizing the world. They teach that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth and that, in order to believe, this Gospel must be carried into all the world and preached to every creature. This practically unites them with all missionary people in sending the good news to the nations.

(5) The same course of argument will at once eliminate all controversy with respect to the baptismal question. Practically there has never been any controversy about whether immersion is baptism or not. With the exception of a few very small men it has always been conceded by the whole of Christendom that immersion is valid baptism. But very many are unwilling to concede that sprinkling and pouring can be baptism at all. Now as the controversy is about the latter, Disciples say, why not give up what is not at all necessary, and for the sake of union adopt that action of baptism which is practically universally admitted to be both Scriptural and valid.

Following the same line of argument we at once reach a common platform with respect to the subject of baptism. Nobody questions that believer's baptism is valid. Controversy among professed Christians is impossible as long as we occupy the catholic ground of believer's baptism. It is only when we contend for infant baptism that alienation and strife take the place of union and harmony.

The Disciple position, as regards the *design* of baptism, admits also of an irenicon which makes Christian union not only possible but very easily accomplished, if all will accept substantially the main thing for which Disciples contend. They contend strongly for what they believe the Scrip-

tures teach as to the design of baptism; but as this question belongs properly to the domain of *philosophy* rather than to the plain facts, Disciples do not make agreement with them on this matter a necessary condition of fellowship. If the command to be baptized is honestly obeyed, Disciples will not allow their views as to what baptism means to stand in the way of Christian union.

(6) Equally true is the contention of the Disciples, when we test it by the *name*. They have always been willing to be called by any Scriptural names such as, "Christians," "Disciples of Christ," "Children of God," "Saints," "Brethren," etc., etc., but in refusing to be called by any human name, or after any human leader, they have simply refused to abandon a catholic platform for that which is narrow and exclusive. They say, why not exclude all names that are divisive in their character and adopt only those that are Scriptural and that all can accept?

(7) The subject of Church government may also be settled by the same method of contending for catholicity. Disciples occupy a position with respect to this matter which practically covers the whole ground. They have bishops or presbyters in all their Churches, while these Churches are nevertheless congregational in the best sense. They hold that while the Church certainly occupies a very prominent place in the remedial system, nevertheless it is not the first nor the most important thing to be considered. It may be that too much emphasis has not been placed upon it, but unquestionably too little has been placed upon that which properly comes before it, and without which the Church is not worthy of consideration at all. The world has really nothing to do with the Church; it is Christ that the world must consider. Not only Christ, but "Christ and him crucified."

The tendency to bring the Church forward and put the Gospel in the background, is one of the

evils of the apostasy. The former certainly has its proper place, but it is the latter that is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes it." But the questions, "Which Church is right?" "What Church should I join!" and "What Church do you belong to?" clearly indicate the influence of the popular teaching upon this subject. The sinner's attention should not be directed to the Church at all. His whole thought should be fixed upon the Gospel, and when he has obeyed this, it is then proper for him to consider questions relating to the Church. Hence, in pleading for a restoration of primitive Christianity, Disciples insist upon putting everything in its proper place. Usurpation seems to be the law of the apostasy. Normal position is Heaven's law.

But the Disciples must not be understood as advocating loose notions as to the Church. When we begin to talk about Christ, it is not difficult to run into sentimental platitudes. In fact, there is a great deal of preaching and writing on this subject, which, however well intended, is by no means helpful to a hearty faith in the Christian religion. While it is unquestionably true that Christ, in his glorious personality, as the chief among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely, should be preached to sinners; at the same time, it should not be forgotten that, in an important sense, he and his Church cannot be separated. As well think of separating the head and the body; for Christ is the Head, and the Church is his body. There must not, therefore, be any letting down of the dignity or importance of the Church. To try to exalt Christ at the expense of his Church is alike unscriptural and unphilosophical, and generally ends in a practical rejection of both.

This brings me to say that a correct understanding of the New Testament Church is essential to a complete return to Apostolic Christianity. What, then, is the Scriptural meaning of the term

“Church” as applied to the children of God?

Perhaps we may be assisted in this important study if I at once state that, in my judgment, the term “Church” always conveys the same idea, and that any alteration of this idea is effected by modifying words or conditions. What, then, are the words or conditions which modify the term “Church?” To answer this question fully would require more space than I can now command. Hence, I must confine myself mainly to a single modification, viz., that of *place*. What, then, is the territorial modification?

A very suggestive fact meets us at the beginning of our investigation. We often read of the Church at a given place, but never Churches. Ten times the Church at Jerusalem is spoken of; five times the Church at Corinth; five times the Church at Ephesus; four times the Church at Antioch; three times the Church at Laodicea; three times the Church at Thessalonica; twice the Church at Smyrna; twice the Church at Pergamos; twice the Church at Thyatira; twice the Church at Sardis; twice the Church at Philadelphia; twice the Church at the house of Aquilla; once the Church at the house of Nymphas; once the Church at the house of Philemon; once the Church at Cencherea; and once the Church at Philippi. In all these instances the term “Church” is in the singular number, and is modified only by the territorial condition. It is always the Church, but the Church at a place, the Church localized. But observe that this local modification in no way changes the meaning of the leading term. Nor is this Church at a place different in any essential feature from any other use of the word when applied to the children of God, except as to the local modification.

When, however, the term is used in the plural number, then the local modification changes from a definite city or place to a large territory, such as “Asia,” “Judea,” “Galatia,” “Macedonia,” etc.,

etc. Hence, we read of the "Churches of Asia," but not the "Church of Asia," the "Churches of Judea," the "Churches of Galatia," the "Churches of Macedonia," etc., etc., but never of the single Church of any province. This last fact is a habit of language. The units of several places when added together, take the plural form or have a plural signification. Hence, when the Church in a province is spoken of, the local modification controls the form of the leading term. By adding together a number of places belonging to one province, the local modification, for the time being, changes the singular of the leading term into the plural; and this being true, it is both proper and scriptural to speak of the Church at Liverpool, the Church at London, the Church at New York, the Church at Chicago, etc., but not of the Churches at any one of these places, though it would be correct to speak of the Churches of these places when the places are taken together. It is also proper and scriptural to speak of the Churches of England, the Churches of France, the Churches of the United States, but not of the Church in the singular number of these countries, for the units taken together pluralize the leading term.

But when speaking of the Church of God, without using any local modification, it is always proper and scriptural to speak of it in the singular number. However, should we speak of it as limited to some province or large territory, we would certainly use the plural number. Still, this in no way affects the idea of unity which is certainly the leading idea, since the term "Church" is only made to surrender its singular form when the local modification is counted rather than the term "Church" itself.

The practical results of these conclusions are very great. We can already see our way to an earnest protest against at least too extreme views held on this subject. We feel sure that neither Dio-

cesan Episcopacy nor extreme Congregationalism is taught in the Scriptures. Nor do I believe that either of these represents the safest or wisest form of Church government.

To sum up the Disciple position, it may be well to indicate specifically the comprehensive platform for which they contend. This will give a clear idea as to what they are trying to accomplish. Their aim, briefly stated, is as follows:

(1) To exalt Jesus, both as Lord and Christ; and, as Head of his body, the Church, that he may "in all things have the pre-eminence." They sum up everything in him. With them he is all in all. Without his light and love we perish forever. His divinity is our foundation; his life our example; his intercession our fountain of grace and mercy; his teaching our guide; his Church our school; his spirit our comforter; his Gospel our reliance for the conversion of sinners; his commandments our life; his promises our rejoicing; so that through faith and obedience, we are blessed with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." To trust in the Lord Jesus, to love and obey him—this is salvation here and life eternal hereafter.

(2) To reject human dogmas and human names as tending to division among the people of God, and to adopt that only as authoritative for which there is a clearly revealed precept or example in the New Testament.

(3) To turn alien sinners to Christ, according to New Testament teaching and example, and to build up these converts in faith, hope, and love.

(4) To earnestly enjoin the obligation to observe the first day of the week as the Lord's day, in commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, by acts of worship such as the New Testament teaches, and by spiritual culture such as befits this memorial day; and to enjoin especially the obligation of the Lord's Supper, to be observed

every Lord's day, in commemoration of the suffering and death of him "who was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

(5) To establish Churches without human names, ordinances, or creeds; Churches which are Congregational, because self-governed and independent; Presbyterian, because administered by presbyters, or elders and deacons; Episcopal, because an elder, or pastor, in the New Testament sense, is an overseer; Baptist, because faithful to New Testament teaching as regards the ordinance of baptism; Methodists, because doing all things methodically; or to use the Scripture style, "decently and in order;" Catholic, because insisting upon nothing that may not be adopted by all other religious bodies without any surrender of conscience; in short, Churches that are Christian and Apostolic, because comprehending in their requirements all that Christ and his Apostles, in their teaching, make necessary in order to form that society which is called the Church, or the body of Christ.

(6) To illustrate in the life of the Churches the Christianity of Christ, which is something more than doctrinal orthodoxy; so much so, indeed, that it is Divine living, and much of it is living for others. Consequently, the spirit of missions must necessarily animate all who hope to be actively alive in the Churches, for the spirit of missions is essentially the spirit of Christ.

(7) To pray and work for the union of God's people, and to co-operate with all Christians, as far as possible, in all good works for the salvation of men and the glory of God.

Now it seems to me that every fair-minded person must regard the position of the Disciples, when taken as a whole, as eminently catholic as well as reasonable. It is also workable, whenever those who profess to be followers of the Christ will

agree to be guided solely by his authority. But as long as men will continue to make their own conditions of fellowship, and insist upon these in order to Christian union, then it is highly probable that no kind of union will ever be practically realized, to say nothing of a Christian union, the only kind that could possibly be of much particular value. If, however, all who love the Lord Jesus Christ would adopt the principles and practices set forth in the foregoing considerations, I do not doubt for a moment that Christian union would no longer be a "hope deferred," but would be a joyful realization before the present decade shall have ended. The real difficulty in the way of such a union is the additions which have been made by the respective denominations, while none of these additions are absolutely essential to the salvation of men.

The Disciple contention is not only catholic and reasonable, but workable also, from the fact that it makes the terms of fellowship precisely equal to the terms of Discipleship; or to put it in other words, the terms of fellowship must never be made to comprehend more than is necessary to make Christians and maintain the Christian character. This being true, the Disciple position offers a comprehensive and practical platform on which every Christian can stand without surrendering anything that is necessary to the integrity of the Scriptures on one hand, or the sacredness of conscience on the other.

III. The Disciple Plea is the most hopeful that has yet been presented for the rapid and successful Evangelization of the world. Just three things seem to comprehend the whole area of the responsibility of Christians. These are as follows:

(1) The faithful proclamation of the Gospel to every creature in order to the conversion of the world to Christ.

(2) The union of all, who are thus converted,

upon the one foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

(3) The building up of all these disciples in faith, hope, and love, or in other words, developing them from "Babes in Christ," to that spiritual manhood which will give them an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom.

The first of these claims our main consideration for the present moment. It is simply certain that no advocacy of any religious plea can possible commend itself to thinking people, unless it has in it a distinct promise and possibility of evangelizing the world. From the very beginning of their movement, the Disciples have laid much emphasis upon the preaching of the Gospel to the unconverted. In the early days of their movement every Disciple was really an evangelist, carrying with him at all times and in all places the New Testament, and preaching the Gospel to every creature as he had opportunity. Possibly some of this preaching was very crude, and in not a few instances it may have been ill-timed, and consequently probably did more harm than good. But, speaking broadly, there can be no question about the fact that this zeal for converts was one of the strong features of the movement during its early history. Since Churches have become established in nearly all important centers, evangelization has been carried on mainly, either in or from these Church centers, and as new methods of evangelization have come into vogue, individual efforts, such as characterized the early days of the movement, have become less and less active. It may be questioned whether this change in the policy of the Disciples will be productive of the best results. However, as I am just now stating facts rather than the philosophy of these facts, I must leave this important question without any further consideration.

The point I wish to emphasize is the fact that, whether Disciples work by the old methods or the new, it cannot be doubted that their preaching of the Gospel has not only been eminently successful in winning souls to Christ, but has also impressed its character upon the whole religious world. Very few of the religious denominations now preach as they did in the beginning of the last century, or, indeed, at the beginning of the last *half* century. There has been a wonderful change within the past fifty years. It is easily demonstrable that this change has not yet gone far enough, but undoubtedly it is quite sufficient to make it evident that the Disciple movement has done much to liberalize, vitalize, and even Christianize some of the preaching of the present day, outside of their own communion. The reaction of their movement upon the Christian world generally has done much to bring the preaching of the twentieth century more distinctly into line with a Gospel that is rational and that is, therefore, a factor in the possible conversion of the world. I think it is practically certain that the Disciple contention made the recent great Inter-Church Conference on Federation at New York, a possibility. It could not have been held even ten years ago. It was a sign of the times.

The main point to be considered is this: Is it probable that the general masses of men, the world over, will be influenced by any other plea than that which comprehends the main features of the Disciple movement? If it be true that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, and if it be also true that the whole Gospel message is extremely simple and thoroughly adapted to man as he is, it ought to be evident to even the tyro in religious thinking that the complex theologies of denominational Christendom can never conquer the world for Christ. Christ himself, or the Gospel message which is the embodiment of his redemp-

tive work, can alone meet the case and satisfy the conditions of those who are without God, and without hope in the world.

It seems to me that at this very point the Disciple movement furnishes the key to the whole situation. They make their Gospel proclamation a very simple matter by applying the system of hermeneutics to which I have already called attention. They have always emphasized the difference between the dispensations. They have insisted that the Gospel in its fullness was never preached until the day of Pentecost, and that consequently we cannot find a full and satisfactory answer to meet all the cases of inquiring souls until we come to Pentecost, which marks the beginning of the Christian dispensation. They have sought constantly to follow the example of the Apostles in preaching the Gospel to the unconverted. They have noticed that the Apostles simply told the story of the cross, the story of Jesus and his love, and the matter was then left with the hearers addressed whether they would accept or reject the message delivered. Would it not inspire a new confidence in the power of the Gospel which is now preached, if we were to act in precisely the same manner? As the matter now stands, it is no wonder that the people hesitate. When they see that this Gospel has to be supplemented by so many devices unknown to the primitive Church, it certainly is not surprising that they should lose faith in Christianity and become either indifferent to its claims entirely, or else active opponents of its progress.

What is needed, then, first of all, is a return to the Apostolic plan of working. Let us throw aside our human expedients, our uninspired means, and let us go back to the old Jerusalem Gospel, and preach it with all the fervor that we can command; and then if our success is not commensurate with our expectations, the fault at least

will not be ours, and we can with a clear conscience say that we are free from the blood of all men.

Accepting the Word of God as a sufficient rule of faith and practice, it is abundantly evident that the present state of religious society is abnormal. No honest, well-informed person would for a moment contend that the denominationalism of to-day fairly represents the Primitive Church. Among intelligent, earnest people there is everywhere manifest a feeling of dissatisfaction with the present order of things. Many, indeed, are seeking for a remedy and would gladly accept of any solution that gives reasonable promise of unity among the children of God and a speedy conversion of the world. This fact was made distinctly evident at the Inter-Church Conference on Federation.

In proposing such a remedy, Disciples contend that two extremes must be carefully avoided. First, in breaking away from sectarianism we must not run into latitudinarianism. This has been the fatal mistake of some very intellectual and cultivated people. Their own culture is quite too broad for the narrow shibboleths of religious partyism, and failing to distinguish between Christianity proper and the modern representations of it, they continue their rebound from the dogmatism of human creeds to what is practically infidelity. This is greatly to be regretted, not only on their own account, but because of the efficient aid which they are capable of rendering the cause of Christ. Are they wholly responsible for the position which they at present occupy? We certainly do not wish to lessen their responsibility in the smallest degree, but we cannot help feeling that many of those who condemn them most are not entirely without blame in the matter. Let those who profess to be Christians bring their faith and practice into harmony with the Divine standard, and then they will at least be in a position to consistently find fault with

those who are now driven from the communion of the various denominations by the interposition of the "traditions of the fathers."

But the second point to be regarded is equally important. While we carefully avoid the humanisms of the denominational creeds we must be equally careful not to make an iron bedstead of the Bible. The Lord never intended his Holy Word to be used in any such way. Especially is the New Testament far removed from such a notion. That it is an infallible guide to all who accept him, who is the life and light of it, I do not for one moment question. But is it not possible to claim the Bible as our rule of faith and practice, and yet become as intensely sectarian as those who formulate their faith in human symbols? My own observation leads me to conclude that some who claim to be the earnest advocates of the Bible, and the Bible alone, are the most intensely sectarian in fact, intolerant in spirit, and unfruitful in living of all who represent the present divided state of Christendom. Surely this ought not to be so, but that it is so will not be doubted by those who are competent to judge. This brings me to state more distinctly our own religious position.

The problem we are seeking to solve may be stated as follows: Is it possible, in our church life, to be true to the Divine Word and at the same time be free enough for every worthy aspiration of every human soul? In other words, can we earnestly advocate strict fidelity to God's Holy Truth, and still meet the reasonable desires of those who are to-day driven to latitudinarianism or rationalism by the human dogmas which have been erected into tests of fellowship? This is the problem of problems; and yet, in my judgment this problem must be solved if the world is ever converted to Christ. When it is solved, both sectarianism and infidelity will be shorn of their strength, and consequently, the future triumphs of

the Gospel will be commensurate with our most ardent expectations.

Is it possible, then, for us to be true to the Bible and at the same time free from sectarianism? Can we meet the reasonable demands of the highest culture, and still avoid the extreme of latitudinarianism? I answer both of these questions in the affirmative, and I feel sure that, if the Christianity of the New Testament is once properly apprehended, no one will have much difficulty in agreeing with what may at first seem to them an impracticable position.

Faith and obedience are the two words which comprehend the whole of Christian obligation and duty. Concerning this statement there would, perhaps, be no difference of opinion among those who are at all competent to judge. Our differences begin only when we begin to define these terms: What is faith? and what is obedience? or what is properly and scripturally embraced within these terms?

This brings us to inquire what is the faith necessary to the formation of Christian character? Without referring to the proof-texts (though plenty of these are ready to hand) it will be sufficient to say that the Apostles preached only one thing, viz., that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God. This proposition, though variously stated, was everywhere presented as containing, so far as faith goes, all that was essential to Christian character; and this was not only everywhere preached, but this was what was everywhere believed by those who entered upon the Christian life.

Now, if we limit our Articles of Faith to this grand proposition, are we not still true to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures? and can we add anything to this while we confine ourselves to the things that legitimately belong to faith? Our position is that we should insist upon nothing as an

article of faith that is not essential to Christian character; and as, according to the Scriptures, the only faith required to this end is a hearty trust in the personal Redeemer, we at once reject all human creeds and insist upon the Divine creed as the only foundation of the Christian's faith. Some of our objections to human symbols may be briefly stated as follows:

(1) They substitute philosophical speculations for the personal Christ, thereby usurping the sphere of faith with the things that belong to knowledge.

(2) They are without any divine sanction, and consequently should not be made tests of Christian fellowship. We should certainly have a "thus saith the Lord" for everything that enters into the question of fellowship.

(3) They are schismatical in their tendency. The history of the Church is a sad commentary on the influence of human dogmas upon the peace and harmony of the children of God.

(4) No human creed can be perfect. Hence, even if it were right to formulate the things of knowledge and make them objects of faith, such formulas must of necessity exhibit many of the traces of human weakness. Men are short-sighted at best, and it ought to be expected therefore that their most careful work will lack the completeness which should characterize a creed for the Church of God.

(5) No human creed can ever be adapted to every creature. The Infinite Mind can alone provide that which is suitable to such an infinite variety of circumstances and conditions as is everywhere found among men. The best that any number of men can do is to provide for those who are of like tastes, habits, etc., and in like circumstances with themselves. They cannot reasonably hope to take into consideration the whole sphere of human thought and action, consequently the most

perfect human creed possible must, after all, have only a limited application.

(6) Human creeds are not only limited in their reach, and unsatisfactory in their character, but they are not permanent. They are either changing or else passing away entirely. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and forever."

(7) God has given to the Church a creed—a Divine creed—and it is disrespectful to our Heavenly Father, presumptuous and wicked to substitute anything for that which Divine wisdom has prepared.

Such are some of the objections that may be urged against human creeds as bonds of union and communion among the followers of Christ, and we think that this indictment of these creeds is quite sufficient to condemn them to everlasting banishment from all the places they now occupy.

"What is the 'true theology?' The Mind
Grows dizzy with the creeds that men would teach;
How shall the earnest seeker ever find
The Way, The Truth? for far and wide men preach
Conflicting dogmas, doctrines lov'd by each,
While hung'ring Spirits starve for Christ's own Bread,
The Bread of Life; and many vainly reach
With hands which seek for comfort, through the dread
And murky air, where Love and Hope seem crushed
and dead.

"Dogma's a curse! The path of truth is clear,
Show where the Christ Himself hath calmly trod,
See where the life of love hath vanquished fear,
Read in the awful cross man's way to God!
Here lies our safety, heavenly is the road;
Christ's own true words, not men's, must be our guide,
'Follow thou Me, for thee I bore Sin's load.'
No man will fail of truth, whate'er betide,
Who hears that voice and follows Christ the crucified."

I think we have now made it evident, so far as faith is concerned, that it is quite possible to be true to the teaching of the Scriptures, and at the same time entirely free from sectarianism. In fact we think our position is not only true to the Word of

God, but would, if generally approved, completely overthrow sectarianism with all of its concomitant evils, and thus open the way for a complete restoration of Primitive Christianity in both its faith and practice.

But is this position such as will provide for the reasonable demands of the broadest culture without reaching the point of latitudinarianism? If so then we have surely solved the religious problem of the present age.

Of course we do not hope to present what will meet the unreasonable demands of culture, no more than we could provide for the satisfaction of the spirit of sectarianism. No religious position that can be taken will suit either of these. Men who are in the Church for selfish purposes, or who are out of it for the same reason, are not likely to be influenced by the considerations we are offering. I make a broad distinction between sectarianism in *form* and sectarianism in *spirit*. I think there are many who occupy a sectarian position who are nevertheless largely free from the sectarian spirit. It is also true that there are many highly cultured people who stand to-day practically opposed to Christianity, who have failed to distinguish between the Christianity of the New Testament and the modern representations of it. They have been driven into apparent infidelity by the unreasonable human systems which have usurped the place of the religion established by Christ and his Apostles.

Let us test this matter for a moment. How many so-called infidels of the present time really reject the proposition we have presented as the Christian's creed? Doubtless there are some. But is not the number small as compared with those who reject the various human symbols which are offered as bonds of fellowship? And would not even this number still be reduced if human symbols were all abandoned and the Divine Creed everywhere respected as it was in the Primitive Church? I feel sure that to ask these questions is to prac-

tically answer them. No one who is at all acquainted with the present state of religious controversy will question the possibility of satisfying a large portion of those who are now standing outside of the Churches by making the proposition we have presented the only object of faith.

But there is still another question of prime importance which must be briefly noticed. Could such a position as I have presented be justly chargeable with latitudinarianism? I am conscious that some will think so, and hence there are those who will doubtless wish to hedge against this tendency with human definitions and explanations. But just here is the precise origin of human creeds against which we have presented such formidable objections. It is perhaps impossible to provide against all difficulties, no matter what course we may pursue, and it may be that some would accept the Divine Creed and yet practically hold to latitudinarian views. But I fail to see how human symbols can restrain this tendency. As a matter of fact I know that this tendency is again and again developed in all the Churches of Christendom, notwithstanding the barriers that have been erected against it. It might occasionally show itself among those who hold simply the Divine Creed. But I feel sure there is less danger of this when we are guided by Divine authority, than when our safeguards are the definitions of human creeds. Hence, by accepting the Divine Creed we not only reduce the tendency to adopt heresy within the Church, but we largely reduce the number of heretics outside the Church by bringing the condition of entrance to the reasonable requirements of Apostolic precept and example.

Surely the proposition that Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God is comprehensive enough for the greatest intellect in all the world, while at the same time it is simple enough for every responsible person to apprehend. Who can fathom the depth, or ascend to the heights of the personal

Christ? Who can measure the length and breadth of him who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and Omega of all time and eternity? And yet, how simple is his personality when he touches human need! Truly can we say:

"Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

The salvation of the world is not possible until the eclipse of the Sun of Righteousness is ended. The real Christ is now obscured by our "little systems," and consequently the work of saving men is very much hindered while the subjugation of the world to his imperial reign is correspondingly delayed. The Disciple Plea aims to end the eclipse and thereby reveal again the full-orbed glory of Christ as when his light first shone upon this sin-stricken earth.

The position of the Disciples is especially strong and hopeful in the work of foreign missions. Our missionaries have no apologies to make for denominational divisions. They do not have to defend the Bible and at the same time defend a human creed. When they present Christ to the heathen world, as the Savior of sinners, they are not compelled to try to explain and justify the division of his body into the numerous sects which now make up the sum total of modern Protestantism.

Another important fact should be remembered. In all foreign missionary fields the prevailing religions are dominated by some great personality. Mohammedanism has for its head Mohammed; Buddhism has for its head Buddha; Brahmanism has for its head Brahma, etc., etc. Now the first and most important thing the missionary has to do is to influence the heathen to change from one leader to another. Nor is this a very difficult matter when our Divine Lord is presented in all the

loveliness of his personal character, and he alone is made the object of faith.

Such are some of the reasons why the Disciple movement is still needed. From the foregoing considerations, it is evident that this movement meets the present conditions of the world as no other religious movement does. It is readily admitted that many of the denominations of Christendom are doing a great work, but denominationalism itself is a sign of weakness, and is one of the reasons why the conversion of the world is delayed. We have seen that the Disciple movement is a plea for Christian union, and such a union is absolutely necessary in order to the conversion of the world; but such a union can never be attained except upon a platform that is catholic, reasonable and workable. We have found the Disciple Plea fairly meets the conditions which are necessary in the evangelization of the world, in the union of Christians, and in the building up of these Christians in faith, hope and love. Surely such a Plea as this can never grow old, or fall into disuse, as long as there are souls to save and continents to win for Christ.

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PART III.

HOW CAN THE PLEA BE MADE MOST SUCCESSFUL?

This age is practical if it is nothing else. It judges everything by results. In the long run it makes very little difference about either our principles or methods, if they do not yield satisfactory returns. It is, therefore, useless to claim for the Plea of the Disciples superiority over that of others unless it can be shown that it accomplishes much more in all that pertains to the progress of the religion of Christ in the world.

Nor will it do to rest upon past successes. These, no doubt, have been very great, but they will not suffice to meet the demands of the present or the future. We must provide adequately to meet our whole responsibility, or else we may have applied to us the language of our Divine Lord when he asked, "What do ye more than others?" Undoubtedly if the Disciples occupy the advantageous position to which I have called attention, there can be no excuse for them if they fail to achieve the greatest possible success in the work of evangelizing the world, and in other respects meeting the conditions of the Christian life. Claiming, as they certainly do, a superiority in the position which they occupy, they must now show by their works that they are equal to the high claims which they make for themselves with respect to the great principles for which they contend. In my judgment their Plea must be made eminently successful in the future, unless we are prepared for grievous disappointment with reference to the progress and final triumphs of Christianity. Let us, then, earnestly consider some of the conditions which must be observed if our success shall be,

even in a moderate degree, commensurate with the claims which we make.

I. We must contend earnestly for the Plea. We have already seen that the Plea is still needed. While it is freely admitted on all hands that other religious bodies have moved up considerably, under the influence of the Disciple contention, at the same time it is undoubtedly true that much still remains to be done before the present divided state of Christendom shall be healed, and the world practically won for our Divine Lord. It is my candid opinion that the Disciples must lead in the great movement which is to carry the banner of the cross to ultimate victory. But they cannot do this if their movement is characterized by half-heartedness or by a doubtful hesitancy which must prove to be little more than practical defeat. To believe in success is success half won. We can not inspire others with the hope of victory while we ourselves are halting between two opinions. If our cause is right and there is a need for it, then we ought to contend for it with all the earnestness that a whole-hearted faith in it inspires. There should be no doubtful *ifs* in our advocacy. We either have a mission to fulfill or we have not. If we have no mission, then let us get out of the way and make room for others to lead. But if we have a mission, and I firmly believe we have, then we must keep up our distinctive work and advocate our distinctive Plea with a faith and earnestness which will assuredly carry conviction wherever manifested. Nothing short of this will justify the high claims which we make with respect to the character of our Plea.

II. We must make our advocacy conform to our environment, as far as this can be done, without the sacrifice of principle. This is an important matter. We need not reproduce the methods of our fathers. Our present environment is different from what theirs was. Indeed, we may not regard our-

selves as bound to reproduce always even the methods of the Apostles. What we must do is to be true to the principles of New Testament teaching under all circumstances. Principles are eternal; methods are constantly changing. We must not, therefore, fasten our movement to the "dead hand" of the past. The times have changed and we must change with them, in so far as it is necessary to adjust our Plea to the new condition of the age in which we live.

I do not mean by this that we must surrender any truth for which we have ever contended; nor do I mean that it is our duty to simply submit to the imperious demands of an environment which we may have had little to do in making. It is our duty to influence our environment so that it will heartily receive the very Plea for which we are contending; but we must not forget that this can be done far better by adapting ourselves and our advocacy to the age in which we live, wherever this can be done without a sacrifice of principle, than by antagonizing everything and everybody simply because we cannot fully indorse everything which we find around us. We must be wise as well as earnest. A peck of common sense is sometimes better than a hundred bushels of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is good; earnestness is indispensable; faith overcomes the world; but a few pecks of common sense now and then will generally prove to be of great value in the management of any worthy cause. In the past, we have had a reasonable amount of earnestness, but we have not always been wise in every respect. Just now we have reached a time when we cannot afford to make mistakes with respect to a wise policy.

There are generally at least three periods in every new movement:

First, the period of indifference on the part of its enemies.

Second, the period of attack by its enemies.

Third, the period of compromise.

When Nehemiah was building the wall at Jerusalem, his work went through all three of these periods. His enemies first made light of him and his work. They said that a fox could push down the wall he was building. Their next period was the period of warfare. They planned to stop his work by an appeal to the sword; but in this they were thwarted; for while Nehemiah's workmen had the trowel in one hand they held the sword in the other. At last, when all other efforts had failed, Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem sought a conference in the plain of Ono, where doubtless their purpose was to secure a compromise which would be in some way to their advantage.

Our religious movement has passed through at least two of these periods, and we are now in the third. Consequently, while it is our plain duty to meet every honest approach to us, which comes in the spirit of Christian union, we must, at the same time, be careful not to compromise the great principles for which we have contended. We can only be charitable when we are true to the truth. We may compromise *within* the truth, but we dare not compromise the *truth itself*. But *within* the truth there is large opportunity for adapting our Plea to the new conditions of the world which have come to us with the ushering in of the new century.

III. We must not reckon that five are more than ten. We must keep things in their proper proportion. Nevertheless it is undoubtedly true that there is a strong tendency to magnify molehills into mountains, or to make five equal to if not more than ten.

I once had a friend who was constantly warning me against going into particulars when I attempted to relate an incident. He said it was quite possible to spoil a good story by taking too much time with details. He furthermore said that those who heard the incident would remember only the

main features, and, consequently, the particulars were sure to confuse the mind in retaining that which was most important.

Doubtless there is much truth in my friend's philosophy. But there is still a much more important side to this question of particulars. Some people become so entirely absorbed with details that they magnify these far beyond their value. This is especially true in religious matters, where the mint, annise and cummin are constantly made to take the place of the weightier matters of the law; or in other words, some people insist that five are actually more than ten. They seem to loose all idea of proper proportion. In their Church life they are constantly magnifying the little things. With them the general character of a man is practically nothing, if he fails in some small particular which they have magnified into undue importance. It may be that this particular thing is well enough in its place; indeed, it may have the full numerical value of five, but these mathematical champions of the faith at once give it a value exceeding even the number ten, though this latter number does not express anything like the full value of the character which has been weighed in pharisaical scales and found wanting.

The lesson of all this is very important. We must not give too much attention to insignificant particulars. If a man is a Christian, that is the main thing. We must cultivate the right conception of proportion.

Now this is a most suggestive matter as regards the Disciple movement. This movement, when properly understood, is broadly catholic. There is no place in it where a bigotted sectarian can live and prosper, provided the movement is properly interpreted and its principles faithfully carried out in practice. Nevertheless, there is constant danger of loading its great principles down with heaps of rubbish, while there is still a greater dan-

ger of stopping its forward movement by a lot of little contentions, which, though important in some respects, should not be made to occupy the chief place in the Churches by men who have not yet learned that ten are greater than five. What magnifies this danger is the fact that many of these petty considerations, that are insisted upon with so much energy, are purely traditions that have no Scriptural value whatever. Nevertheless, these, in the hands of men and women who have no sense of proportion, are calculated to do a vast amount of harm, even to the wrecking of Churches and to the cultivation of a sectarian spirit which has no place in the New Testament ideal of the religion of Christ.

The Disciple movement cannot go forward as it should do until all this littleness is thrown overboard, and this can never be done until Disciples themselves shall come to understand fully that ten are actually more than five.

IV. In all our relations to other religious bodies and to the people generally we must manifest the right spirit. In contending for the faith, it is not necessary to use a bludgeon. "Sweetness and light" will often do far more than the strongest arguments when these are used in the spirit of dogmatism. It is all very well to contend for the truth. The importance of this I have already emphasized; but what I now wish to say is that this contention should always be in the spirit of truth, for it is quite possible to hold to the truth, with even a firm and persistent grip, and yet fail to manifest the "spirit of truth" which is the peculiar property of those who are the real followers of Christ. Even the world may receive the truth, but the "spirit of truth" it cannot receive. One is the hull; the other the kernel.

The right spirit is always progressive. It is not satisfied with past achievements. It seeks to go forward. It presses towards the highest ideal.

This ideal becomes the standard by which all work is estimated.

One thing is especially necessary with respect to right relations between the different religious bodies. There can never be much progress made towards Christian union until there is a general cessation of misrepresenting one another. Undoubtedly much mistrust arises from a misstatement of each other's position while discussing denominational differences. However, it ought to be emphatically stated that this habit does not always result from unworthy motives. It is at least charitable to believe that in many cases the misrepresentation is wholly from a misunderstanding of the issues involved. But whatever the cause may be, it must be removed in order that the real differences may be discussed in the spirit of that charity which "thinketh no evil."

But however this may be, the honest convictions of all must be sacredly protected. The vision of conscience must be kept clear. Our present divisions are bad enough; but a dishonest union would be infinitely worse. If a real union of Christians is ever effected, some of us will have to surrender a few of our crochets, and we shall doubtless be all the better for that. But we dare not, for a single moment, seek a union which would, in the slightest degree, degrade the moral faculty.

Disciples should, therefore, recognize the fact that other religious bodies must be honestly convinced before it is possible to hope that they will surrender their present positions, or accept even the reasonable position which the Disciples occupy. All cannot see our position as we do, and the right spirit will be willing to wait on development; and in any case it will exercise charity toward every soul that is seeking the light and is willing to walk in it.

We must also recognize the fact that others may be right in some things wherein they differ from

us, notwithstanding we are thoroughly conscientious in our own convictions. Honesty does not necessarily involve infallibility. Saul of Tarsus was evidently wrong while persecuting the Church, yet he lived in all good conscience toward God the whole of that time. We claim the right, the inalienable right, to think, speak and act for ourselves within legitimate bounds, and are not willing to submit tamely to any obtrusive interference with this right; but are we willing to grant to others the same right we claim for ourselves? Doubtless most persons will demand for themselves all that I have indicated, but will they heartily, joyfully, and without reservation, grant the same right to every other man? When this question is answered honestly in the affirmative, we have at one bound practically crossed a sea of difficulties on our way to Christian union. The spirit which Disciples must manifest toward their religious neighbors should fully recognize the rights of conscience in the case of every one from whom we may honestly differ.

But, after all, the right spirit will help us to emphasize points of agreement rather than points of difference. I do not mean that differences must be ignored entirely. I believe in looking squarely at all the difficulties in the case, and I have not a particle of faith that we can make our religious movement an eminent success if we do not take into consideration the differences which really do exist. At the same time, I think that a right spirit will help us to understand that unimportant differences should not occupy the important places while points of agreement are made to practically count for nothing. As already intimated, there is a strong tendency in human nature to pervert the law of proportion. We often make the smaller things count for more than the larger ones. It is unquestionably true that in the larger and more important things there are many points where most

of the denominations practically agree with us, and which the Disciples need not antagonize. In any case, it is certain that a right spirit will help us to clear the ground of all hindrance in the way of our ultimate triumph, while it is equally certain that an uncharitable spirit will retard our progress for years to come, if it does not completely compel us to recognize failure instead of victory.

V. We must make faith and obedience the essential things in the recognition of Christian character rather than knowledge and growth. The latter are very important, but the former are indispensable. Knowledge means a great deal. But there are two things in the Apostle Peter's great pyramid of Christian character that come before knowledge, viz., faith and courage. Nevertheless, knowledge is a most important element of that character when we once have the foundation to which it may be added. If this is not so, then there is no proper place for all our colleges and universities, for our books and newspapers, for our sermons and lectures. Disciples have shown their high appreciation of knowledge in the activity they have manifested with respect to education. Considering the age of their movement, they have done much to accentuate the importance of intellectual training, and it may be truthfully said that they are just now showing unusual interest in the building up of educational institutions. All this is a valuable indication as to the growth of the movement in the future; for let it be distinctly understood that a worthy growth depends largely upon the proper use of educational facilities.

At the same time, it is well to guard against a tendency which may become a great danger. It sometimes happens that our best opportunities become our final ruin. Knowledge, unwisely used, only gives power to propagate evil. When there is a conflict between head and heart there must al-

ways be danger of a wreck of character. As regards Christianity, the heart has the regal position. Nothing can be made an assured success without the co-operation of the affections. Consequently, even faith itself has no potency in the building of religious character until it reaches the heart. We must believe with the whole heart, and then we may act; hence, faith and obedience stand in front of all legitimate development, so far as Christianity is concerned.

Is Christian Union possible? In answering this question we at once call attention to our religious position. What is it we propose to do? I have already stated that it is our high aim to supplement the work of other reformations by filling up the chasm between the point where their work stopped and the Church of Christ as revealed in the New Testament. In other words, we propose to restore the simple faith and practice of the primitive Christians. Disciples claim that the creed of the Church should be the same now as in the days of the Apostles. This was then a very simple but grandly comprehensive proposition. It was variously worded, but it always expressed substantially that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Around this proposition the primitive Christians gathered as sheep around a shepherd, for it brought them at once into contact with the person of Christ rather than the cold statements which have since been formulated in human symbols. Nothing short of a return to this primitive creed will bring together the broken fragments of Protestantism and restore peace and harmony among the followers of Jesus.

One of the chief difficulties in the way of Christian Union is the fact that theologians do not properly distinguish between faith and philosophy. They are not satisfied for us to believe the *facts* of religion; we must accept their *explanation* of these facts. Now, that Christianity has a true

philosophy will not, I presume, be denied by any one. But it is altogether possible for people to be saved who have not the slightest idea of what that philosophy is. The faith of the Christian is not doctrinal, but personal. It is not belief in a dogma, but in a glorious Person—One who is “able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him.” Hence, the Christian faith is living, earnest, active; not a cold, formal abstraction. It has the power and influence of a personal incarnation; and, as such, impels its possessors to go forward in life’s conflicts and make a character in brave and glorious deeds. Philosophy enters upon the explanation of facts; and, while it is possible to reach a right conclusion in reference to all legitimate philosophical questions, it is nevertheless true that, in the sacred Scriptures, the “unity of the faith” is never made to rest upon any such matters—faith in Christ and obedience to His commandments being the only test of fellowship in the Church of Christ.

With this very evident distinction before us, is it not strange that theologians have insisted upon unity where unity is neither possible nor always desirable, and have been little concerned about the only unity we can ever have, or that would be, in any important sense, beneficial? I think it cannot successfully be denied that the grounds of alienation and division among the followers of Christ do not relate so much to faith, as to philosophy; not to facts, but the explanation of facts. To illustrate: Men can all unite in the belief of the Bible statement, that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” But this will not satisfy the demands of philosophy. It starts a number of questions which may be important enough in themselves, but should never be made tests of fellowship among Christians. It may be well enough for some minds to consider the *manner* in which the Divine nature was united to the human in Christ;

whether he was properly to be called *one* person or *two*; whether he should be regarded as *one substance*, or of *like substance* with the Father; whether the Deity *suffered* at the crucifixion; *in what way* the sacrifice was *necessary*, etc. But these questions belong to philosophy, not to faith; and if they are to be settled before Christians can have fellowship one with another, then we may as well conclude at once that the prayer of the Savior for unity among His followers will never be answered; for it is simply certain that theologians will never agree concerning these philosophical questions.

How much better it would be to discuss these questions, of need be, but hold them subordinate to the great law of love, which requires unity only in reference to matters of faith! I think it does not require much reflection to see that the divisions of Christendom largely have their origin in things that do not necessarily enter into the Christian life.

Human symbols all fail to perceive that the faith of the Gospel is not belief in some *particular representation* of Jesus, some definite formula which expresses a philosophical conception of him, but belief in *Jesus himself*—in him who was dead, but is alive for evermore. This the scholasticism of the mediaeval Church would not permit, but insisted upon a scientific formula, which, whether true or false, ought now to be rejected by every intelligent Christian; not because it is true or false, but because it is a *theory*, and as such, is a perversion of "the faith once for all delivered to the saints."

The modern Church has not given as much attention to speculations concerning Christ as the mediaeval Church did, but it has not been by any means indifferent to philosophical questions. What the theologians at Nicae, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, regarded as the vital questions of

Theology and Christology, our modern divines have been disposed to consider of secondary importance, while they have given the first place to the subjects of Anthropology, Soteriology, and Eschatology. These subjects have furnished the weapons for modern theological pugilism; and, as a consequence, our symbolical literature is full of abstract statements concerning original sin, the doctrine of satisfaction, the resurrection and final state of the dead. But what the modern Church needs to understand is not that the Calvinistic Anthropology is superior to the Arminian, or the Arminian Soteriology superior to the Calvinistic, but that these are questions which belong to the schools and not to the Church, and should not therefore be allowed to become tests of any one's faith. These are matters concerning which it may be all-important to have correct views, but they do not properly belong to the question of the Church's creed, and hence should not be made barriers in the way of Christian union and communion; and until theologians shall abandon their fruitless discussions about things that do not legitimately belong to the Christian faith, it is impossible to hope for the "unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

Now this being an admitted fact, the success of our movement must depend largely upon keeping faith and knowledge in their respective, legitimate places, so that they will not interfere with each other, but rather co-operate with each other in all that relates to Christian development. Growth is the end to be sought no matter where we begin, for without growth life itself must ultimately completely fail. But this growth cannot be realized without first reckoning with the heart. The Disciple advocacy has been necessarily often a sort of intellectual combat. It has been largely educational from the head point of view. Indeed, this has been so much the case that some have charged the Disciples with holding to what is little more

than a "head religion."

Now if this view of the matter had any just foundation in the past, there is much more danger that it should have a just foundation in our future advocacy. Just now we are beginning to realize an educated ministry. Our colleges and universities are doing a great work in this direction. But this intellectual development, as regards both our ministry and many of our members, must be made conducive to the growth of the spiritual life, rather than simply the intellectual life. This means that the Gospel must be faithfully preached, and not mere intellectual sermons mainly for the edification of those who have had academic training. It is still true, especially in our great cities, that the people, the unsaved masses, are practically alienated from all the Churches. In the large district of White Chapel in London, about ninety-eight per cent of the people never enter a Church. This may be an extreme case but there can be no doubt about the fact that the great masses of the people everywhere, even in this favored land of ours, are still untouched by the Gospel of the Grace of God. Is not this an appalling fact? Does it not call for a different policy from that which has been used by religious propagandists?

Now, the Disciples ought to lead in a movement to rescue these masses from their indifference to the Gospel. But nothing can be done in this direction until there is a just appreciation of the fact, that we cannot expect these masses to come into our fine Churches and be interested in the kind of worship and preaching which they will generally find in these Churches. There must be at least three important changes made in our own methods before we can take the lead, as we ought to take it, in bringing the world to Christ:

(1) We must not depend upon our Church services, whether evangelistic or otherwise, to reach

the unconverted masses. We must go out after them. Like the Disciples at Jerusalem, when they were scattered abroad, we must go everywhere preaching the Word; and in this great work every Disciple of Jesus must take part, and not leave the whole matter in the hands of the ministry. Every Christian must be a preacher, in the New Testament sense, and then we may hope for practical results which will surprise even Disciples themselves, who have generally made their evangelistic efforts eminently successful.

(2) Our church services must be radically reformed. At present many of these are handicapped by stereoperfunticity. They are tied up in regularity; they are stifled with propriety; they are chilled with formality; and they are dying of respectability; the outcome of which is inefficiency, and often practical death to all religious progress. When the Apostles preached they delivered their message from a free platform. There was nothing stereotyped in their proclamation of the Gospel. Both Jesus and his Apostles courted inquiry, and whatever discussion ensued took place right on the spot. Now this is precisely one of the needs of the present hour. If at least one service, on every Lord's day, should be thrown open to all legitimate inquiry, free to every attendant to discuss, within reasonable limits, any important Biblical question, a new interest would at once be imparted to the proclamation of the Gospel which would bring thousands to hear it, whose ears are now practically closed against it.

(3) Let another service be held which shall be exclusively for worship and edification of Christians. This service should usually be held in the morning and the other in the evening. But, after all, this is a matter of mere detail. The two services can be arranged according to local circumstances.

The Disciple movement, when it was first be-

gun, adopted some of the unfortunate stereotyped habits and customs of the denominations, and as time has gone on; they have grown more and more like these denominations, in the respects to which I am referring. They need now to break away from these habits and customs, or else by and by they will be bound hand and foot, with respect to the matter of meeting the needs of the great people, who are without God and without hope in the world.

In order to reach this high promontory of service we must not forget, as has already been suggested, that we should always distinguish between things that are essentially different. We must recognize the difference between fact and philosophy, truth and opinion, faith and knowledge.

Just here we touch one of the most prolific sources of our unhappy divisions. For instance: it is, unquestionably the duty of every Christian to acquire all the knowledge he possibly can; at the same time, this knowledge should never be allowed to usurp the proper place of faith. Faith and knowledge are alike important, but for very different reasons. Faith is essential to spiritual life; knowledge is essential to spiritual growth. One unites to Christ, the other develops in him; one is vital in the formation of Christian character, the other to the maintenance of Christian character after it has been formed. The danger is that faith without knowledge is apt to run into fanaticism, while knowledge without faith is almost sure to run into bigotry, if not into intolerant dogmatism. Indeed, it not infrequently happens that my neighbor has no patience with me simply because he knows more than I do. But he should at least remember that all the knowledge in the universe, and especially if that knowledge is without faith, cannot save a single human soul. At any rate, we must not forget that, except we be converted and become as little children, we can in nowise enter

the kingdom of Heaven.

The great end to be accomplished in all our service is the salvation of the world. The Gospel message is not primarily intended as simply an educational message. Christ came to seek and to save the lost. The Gospel is first of all and above all, a message of salvation; and while its ultimate reach is educational in the very best sense, its first and great purpose is to reconcile men to God, to bring humanity and Deity into sympathetic touch and joyful fellowship; and no religious people can hope for any great success in the advocacy of their cause who do not make this great mission of the Gospel the main consideration in all that they say and do.

VI. We must make our Christian life correspond with our profession. Profession is well enough in its proper place, but life is the main thing. We must practice as well as preach, and we must practice what we preach. We must let our light shine, so that others seeing our good works may glorify our Father in Heaven. Notice the force of the word *let*. This means to loose, to give freedom to action, or manifestation. It assumes that we can control the light that is in us. We may refuse to let it go forth to convince the world. Many claim to have the truth, but they hold it within locked enclosures, or else keep it from performing its proper function by placing upon it the heavy weight of unfruitful lives. Truth must have a fair chance if it is to accomplish its mission in the world. It is doubtless true that though crushed to earth it will rise again, but this crushing to earth often retards its progress for many generations in the eternal years that are hers.

The Christian ideal is a perfect life, and we have before us in the person of our Divine Lord a perfect example. The Apostle Peter says that Christ "left us an example that we should follow

in His steps." This statement represents the religion of Christ as exactly in the line of the law which governs the moral life. Ethical writers are now nearly all agreed that the explanation of the moral life must be by an *end* or *ideal*. The Christian's ideal is Christ. He embodies in His great personality everything that is needful as a perfect example. We have only to look to Him and walk in His steps. Consequently the Christian religion not only introduces a new commandment, but also a new standard by which the moral life is to be determined. The old ethical standard was a precept; the new is an *example*.

Having, then, set before us an example worthy of our imitation, there is the very highest incentive to bring our lives into harmony with our profession. We have already seen that the profession of the Disciples is great. They claim to occupy a more favorable position than any other religious people; they must now make this claim good by accomplishing more than others. This is precisely the test by which Christ Himself was willing to be judged. He said, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not." This was an honest statement with respect to a transcendent matter. He claimed to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, but he was perfectly willing to have this claim thoroughly tested by His works. If he did not the works of His Father He was willing to be called an imposter, for He came to do His Father's will, and consequently, if he was not found doing that will, He was quite prepared to abandon all claim to His high parentage.

Now we claim to be Christ's—His disciples. But if we do not His works, how can we make that claim good before the people? This is a practical age; and consequently we cannot expect the people to believe in us unless our works correspond, in a reasonable degree, to the claim which we make for ourselves.

We certainly have some reason to be willing to subject ourselves to the test indicated. Our past history has not been an entire failure. Doubtless our work has been imperfect, as must be the case with all human effort. But surely the progress made by our people cannot be regarded with indifference while considering the relation between our religious position and the work we are doing. I have many facts and figures at hand that go to show the wonderful progress the Disciples have made during the period since their movement was inaugurated; but I must not trouble you with details. It is sufficient to say that in less than one hundred years the little band which started the movement has grown to be a great people, numbering nearly a million and a half, while in the matter of the ratio of increase and the ratio of general activity, it is no longer doubtful that the Disciples are in the lead of all the religious forces of the United States.

However, this fact must not excuse us from increasing our efforts to meet all the demands of our high religious position as well as the crying needs of this restless, turbulent age, which can only be harmonized and brought to the highest development through the pure, unadulterated religion of Christ. We must, therefore, show our faith by our works, and this fact imperatively demands of us sacrifices far beyond anything we have yet made. Are we willing to assume this responsibility? This is one of the great questions which are just now pressing on us for solution.

VII. We must accept and proclaim the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Disciples have made this feature of their plea very prominent in their past history. Indeed, their phenomenal success is largely due to their insistence that in seeking to save the lost nothing shall be substituted for the Gospel. But they are constantly exposed to the temptation of

using certain popular methods which practically vitiate the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation. It is to guard against this tendency, that I am insisting that the Gospel itself shall occupy its regal position as regards the conversion of the world.

Looking carefully through the book of Acts, wherein is recorded the preaching and practice of the Apostles, we are at once struck with the simplicity and effectiveness of Apostolic evangelizing. It is evident that the Apostles relied exclusively upon the preaching of the Gospel as the means by which to induce conviction in the sinner. They recognized that the Holy Spirit's work in conversion was through the truth presented, and they, therefore, brought that truth to bear upon the conscience so as to awaken the sinner and bring him into sympathy with their great message. They in no case resorted to modern expedients for this purpose. We do not hear of any special meetings, either for prayer or anything else, in order to make the Gospel message effective. I do not say that such meetings are wrong now, but I do not hesitate to say that they are often misleading. I think it cannot be disputed that the means resorted to by some modern evangelists are often calculated to turn the mind away from the Gospel itself to something else, and consequently the Gospel message is practically nullified by expedients which are wholly human in their origin, and serve to weaken rather than strengthen the message which is delivered. But in the primitive days of the Church there were just three things constantly kept before the people: First, that men are sinners; secondly, that Jesus is the Savior of sinners; and thirdly, *how* this Savior saves the sinners.

The first and second points were distinctly made and forcibly urged upon the attention of the people, and we are told that when the people heard they cried out and asked what they must do. Then

the third point was pressed upon their attention with all the clearness and fervor which the Apostles could command. As already intimated, there were no inquiry meetings, no prayer meetings (such as we have in these days), in fact nothing whatever to turn the attention from the preached Gospel, or to suggest to the unconverted that there was any good reason why they should not at once believe in Jesus Christ and obey Him, instead of waiting for the effect of other influences, such as are provided by modern preachers.

I do not wish to be understood as advocating a slavish following of the Apostolic methods. I believe in adapting our methods, as far as we can consistently do so, to the times in which we live. But Disciples must be careful lest in following the methods of denominational Christendom, they practically pervert their own plea. I have no sort of faith in saving the world unless the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ is used for that purpose. There must be no additions and no subtractions. When this is made secure, any wise methods may be adopted in proclaiming that Gospel.

VIII. Disciples must emphasize the right thing if they wish their Plea to be an eminent success. Is there not danger that they may measure their success by a false standard? Just now they seem to be in the period of money getting, and this money getting may ultimately react unfavorably upon spiritual development.

No doubt money has a very decided influence in controlling the affairs of the world, but it is altogether possible to give it a fictitious value, especially when estimating its value for good. It is not proposed at present to discuss the economic question which is clearly involved in the statement I have just made. But it may be well to consider for a moment what seems to me to be a dangerous concession to the money power. I do not wish to be misunderstood at this point. I do not question

that money has its right place, even in carrying on the work of the Lord; but we are very liable to fix our attention upon the wrong thing when we are estimating the real forces which enter into the progress of the world.

In order that my meaning may be made clear, it will be necessary to give an example or two illustrating the tendency of the times. Let us suppose that some great enterprise is to be undertaken. In such a case what is usually the first consideration in the matter? Is it not almost universally the money question? Can a sufficient amount of money be raised to inaugurate the movement? If this cannot be done, or at least brought practically in sight, then it is at once decided to abandon the enterprise until some more favorable opportunity offers itself.

In view of this fact, it is a great pity that Christian people cannot fix their minds on the right things. We need money, doubtless. In all I have said I do not undervalue it in its right place; but most of all we need brave, courageous, earnest men and women for the mighty conflicts of the future. These men and women must be consecrated, fully given up to the work in which they are engaged. Mere hirelings will not do. Those who are seeking for easy places will not do. The young men who are coming out of our colleges and universities, who are asking for the first places even before they have had a single day of real experience in the work to which they aspire, will not do. We want men who are not educated for salaries, but for labor. We want men who are asking for opportunities for service rather than for a comfortable living. We have plenty of time-servers, plenty of worshipers of mammon; but we want men who accept the teaching of Christ which says that we cannot serve God and mammon. In short, we want men and women who are willing to cut loose from ease, comfort, home, friends, country,

and even give up life itself if needs be, for the glorious privilege of working for the cause of Christ. We want men who, like Abraham of old, will leave everything and go into a land they know not of, simply because the voice of God calls them to duty. The work to be accomplished is altogether too difficult to be undertaken by any who are chiefly influenced by money considerations. In such a work principle must be at the top or else success is sure to be at the bottom. Some have already sold their birthright for a mess of pottage. Not a few have bartered with the money-changers in our religious enterprises and invariably they have received their reward. The halting, hesitating, half-hearted Christianity of the present day is largely the result of an unwise coalition with the money power. A man becomes the head manager of a great monopoly. Everything he touches turns to money. He crushes out all opposition, and continues to heap up his millions of gold. His sins rise to heaven as an abomination in the sight of God. But all this is easily made respectable by a few strokes of policy. He subscribes a large sum of money for the establishment of some educational, religious or social enterprise. That at once makes him even with men and gives him a "write up" in the daily newspapers. But such acts do not blind the eyes of God. He does not receive an unclean gift to compensate for unrighteousness.

What is needed, and what I am pleading for, is a new reformation with respect to this very matter of the right use of money, and also with respect to the right way of making money. We must be divorced from the worship of mammon. We may use mammon, but we must serve God; and we must in all cases subordinate the former to the interests of the latter. Our search, therefore, should be after true men and women and not after gold. Our Klondike should be in the great centers of population, where human life is thickest, rather than in

the ice fields of the frozen north. We must go where men and women grow, and seek to inspire them with the great work of saving souls, and then souls will be saved and the world will be won for Christ.

This, then, is the consecration I mean. It is new when compared with the modern article which wears that name. Nevertheless, it is the same spirit which animated the early Christians, and which achieved such triumphs for the cross, during the first century of the Christian Church. What I claim is that the spirit of our modern Christianity, when taken as a whole, is far from being right. It emphasizes the wrong thing. It has the wrong perspective. It is too conventional, too formal; it lacks enthusiasm; it fails to manifest that unselfish abandonment as regards worldly interests which is the very center and life of both Christ's teaching and example.

I do not wonder that such a man as the late General Gordon refused to be identified with any of the Churches. He was deeply impressed with the life of Christ, and tried to manifest that life in his own conduct; but he had little or no respect for the selfish, proud, worldly-minded spirit which he found in many of the Churches. No wonder that such noble souls should turn away from the spectacle of our modern methods of money-getting for religious purposes, and our modern self-styled heroism wherever a man is willing to be crucified by a big salary and an overplus of comfortable environment.

I am drawing no fancy picture, but I am dealing with the Christian world as a whole. However, it is doubtless true that the Disciples of Christ are not entirely free from the general spirit which characterizes our modern Christianity. Perhaps they are not so fully given up to the tendency of the times as some of the other religious bodies. But there can be no question about the fact that

the leaven, to which I have called attention, is already at work in some of their Churches. And it is almost too much to believe that their ministers are wholly free from the corrupting secularism which has been sweeping over the land. Anyway, we need to emphasize the importance of the new spirit of consecration which I am insisting upon as essential to the great work of saving the world.

As a religious people the Disciples began their movement among the poorer classes. They must now be careful or they will sell themselves for the very wealth which, in the beginning, had no influence at all upon their success. While saying this I am truly thankful to be able to recognize the fact that some of the best men I know are men who have been most successful in acquiring wealth, and are now equally successful in distributing this wealth for good. When wealth has been acquired by legitimate means, and is wisely used, it ought to become and generally will become a power for good. But all the same, it can not be denied that Christ's teaching everywhere warns against the seductive influence of riches; and it furthermore distinctly emphasizes the very fact which I am now seeking to proclaim on the housetop with all the accentuation I can give, viz., that the cause of Christ *never did and never will depend upon the acquisition of money, though such acquisition may be used to great advantage if it is used wisely and well.* In any case it is true that the main thing in the Christ-life is the Christ-Spirit. The Beatitudes may be generalized as follows:

(a) Life consists, not so much in outward conditions, as in an inward disposition.

(b) The only way to reach right outward conditions, is by a right inward disposition.

(c) From the foregoing it follows that we can not have society what it ought to be until souls are right with God.

Hence, I conclude that a right spirit, a conse-

crated spirit, a spirit of sympathy with all that is Christ-like; a spirit that is penetrated and interpenetrated by a Divine passion for souls, is one of the prime needs of the present hour; and when we shall have that spirit in all our Churches and in all Christians, we need not have much fear about ultimately bringing the world to Christ.

IX. Disciples must inspire confidence in their Plea; and in order to do this, they must convince the people that what they preach will bring peace and rest to weary souls. Hence, they must make clear to these souls the conditions upon which peace and rest may be found. It is useless to hope for rest when there is no certainty in reference to our religious steps. Our present condition requires that there shall be infallibility somewhere; and if we do not locate it in the right place, we are sure to locate it, nevertheless. We cannot have peace without this; and so we keep pressing towards that which we suppose is absolutely certain. The struggle may sometimes be long and painful before we settle this important question, but we cannot be satisfied until we persuade ourselves that it is settled, whether it is wisely settled or not.

Now, there are at least four things for which men claim infallibility:

(1) The Romanist believes in an infallible Pope.

(2) The rationalist believes in an infallible reason or science.

(3) The emotionalist believes in an infallible feeling, or what he sometimes calls "experience."

(4) The truly enlightened Christian believes in an infallible Christ.

If we examine carefully each of these, we may then determine which is best calculated to bring us the rest for which we sigh. While a falsehood, heartily believed, may partially satisfy our yearning for certainty, this falsehood cannot, in other respects, meet the great needs of the soul. Hence,

we must seek for that which meets all the conditions of our being and present state.

The position of the Romanist is unquestionably strong. It is intensely dogmatic. It shuts out all room for questioning. It requires absolute submission to the will of the Church. The individual conscience is practically committed to the guidance of those who claim to have it in charge. The man surrenders himself to the absolute authority which he has accepted to lead him. There is no right of appeal; in fact, no need for appeal, since the soul is supposed to be under infallible direction, and cannot therefore be led astray.

This system is pronounced by Protestants despotic. But it is strong, nevertheless. It also brings a degree of satisfaction to those who heartily accept it. It, at least, marks out to its devotees the path of certainty. Its language is imperious, but this very fact does away with the doubting hesitancy, the trembling uncertainty of weaker faiths. In a word, this doctrine of infallibility is the main secret of Roman Catholic success. It gives compactness and vigor to all parts of the Roman system.

Nor has the recent proclamation of the Pope's infallibility been a mistake from a Catholic point of view, as was at the time predicted it would be by Protestants. Personality and individuality are among the chief requirements of this age. Rapidity of action can no longer be ignored when rapidity of communication and travel is so prominent a feature of our times. Hence, the council of the Vatican acted wisely in claiming for the head of the Catholic hierarchy infallibility.

In opposition to this claim of the Romanist, the Rationalist sets up human reason, or an infallible science. But even if this was really infallible, it does not meet the wants of our religious nature. A purely intellectual system is a poor thing for the human heart. Mathematics is infallible, so far as

that is concerned, but this does not bring rest to weary souls. But, as a matter of fact, the claim of the Rationalist will not stand, even from a purely intellectual point of view. Human reason is not infallible. It is constantly making mistakes. Walking wholly by sight will not answer even for this life, and breaks down altogether the moment we come to consider the future. Science is a strong enough word, but it is exceedingly weak in performance. It speaks with great assurance, but its deeds do not half fulfill its promises. Notwithstanding all it has accomplished, it is still true that we "know only in part" and "see through a glass darkly." Faith only can lead us over the dark abyss which stretches out beyond the reach of human reason.

This is just what scientists, at last, are beginning to understand. They are no longer dogmatic and intolerant as they once were. They recognize the fact that many of the conclusions that they thought were infallibly correct must now be revised in the light of further discovery. A few years ago these gentlemen were positive they knew very much about matter and its properties. To-day they speak modestly and with considerable reserve with respect to the whole realm of physical nature. What then can they say of the spiritual world? After all they are compelled to admit that the Christian's guide is the only infallible help when we touch the great questions of human life and destiny.

But just here we meet an opposite extreme. As reason cannot do everything, it is supposed to be unable to do anything. The emotionalist refers everything to feeling. He speaks contemptuously of what he terms "head religion." He believes only in "heart religion," though it is not always easy for him to tell precisely what he means by that. His religious moods are sure to be variable, for feeling is a very changing quantity. Sometimes

he imagines himself in the third heaven; then, again, he is in the depths of despair. He rises and falls according to the ebb and flow of his emotions. This, of all religious life, is the most unsteady. It has not half the strength of Romanism, and none of the intellectual satisfaction of Rationalism. It is simply a perversion of the whole idea of rest. It seeks for infallibility in that which brings constant disappointment.

And yet, it is a most singular fact that what is called Evangelical Protestantism is largely under the influence of this system. We know that Protestants claim to take the Bible as their infallible rule of faith and practice, but do they always really illustrate this in their lives? I fear that a faithful answer to this question would reveal a sad state of things. It is easy to find fault with Romanism for its blind devotion to the decrees of the Church; or with Rationalism, for its want of faith in the Bible; but it is another thing altogether to see to it that we ourselves are not practically guilty of the charge we make against others.

When we quote a "thus saith the Lord" for all we do in religious matters, instead of human creeds or the testimony of excited emotions, Protestantism will then be in a much better position to successfully meet both Romanism and Rationalism than it now is.

And this brings us to inquire what is the only true infallibility, and what is the only position which can bring rest to the straggling, weary world?

I have already stated that the human soul requires infallibility, and we have seen how it seeks for this in the various systems to which I have called attention. This desire for infallibility is partially satisfied in the Word of God. The Divine Word is a sure testimony. It is an unerring guide in all that pertains to our religious life.

But this infallibility must have personality. It

is not enough to believe in something that is certain. Abstractions do not bring rest. Theories are lifeless things. Philosophy is cold and heartless. Even governments or laws do not meet our case. The Bible itself, as an end, would not be sufficient. So far as infallibility goes, it is all-assuring. It is everything we claim for it in that respect. Still, if it failed to bring us in contact with a *Personal Savior*, all its infallibility would be insufficient to meet our case. Our faith must be personal, not doctrinal, if we would find perfect security and peace. Hence, the Bible introduces us to an infallible Person, and asks us to trust in him.

Now, there is only one other condition necessary in order that our safety and satisfaction may be complete. Is he in every respect worthy of our entire confidence?

Is he able to save? At this point we must be well assured. Hence, the infallible Word, which is our guide, declares that he is "able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him."

Is he willing to save? There is nothing more certain than that he is. For this very purpose he came into the world. He came to seek and to save the lost. His very name, "Jesus," tells of his mission of love.

Is he ready to save? Certainly we cannot doubt in this respect. He stands with outstretched arms and begs the heavy-laden to come to him for rest. "Now is the accepted time, now the day of salvation."

Surely all the conditions necessary to perfect trust are fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. As Lord, he has the right to rule over us, and we should willingly submit to his authority; as Jesus, he saves us from our past sins by cleansing us in his precious blood; as the Christ, he constantly intercedes for us and gives us help for every day's conflicts. And, now, if we heartily accept him in

all these offices, we shall not only have infallible certainty in our religious life, but also that "peace which passeth all understanding."

This last point is where Romanism completely breaks down. Even if we were to concede that the Pope is really infallible, as a person he is not worthy of our perfect trust in regard to salvation, is not able to save, is not anointed to save, and cannot, therefore, be ready to save. But Christianity is superior to other systems in that it perfectly meets all the conditions necessary to salvation and the assurance of it. It gives us an infallible Person who is fully able, willing, and ready to accomplish for us everything that is promised. Hence, all we have to do is to believe, obey, and rejoice.

Surely this plea of the Disciples of Christ is worthy of all acceptance. They turn away from all doubtful things and trust Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, as the foundation of the Church and as the only hope of perishing souls. Abandoning all humanisms and speculations, no matter how feasible these may appear, they give themselves unreservedly to the guidance of him who is our infallible Prophet, Priest and King.

X. Disciples must accept more fully the responsibilities resting upon them in view of the high claims which they make. If their plea is what they claim it to be, surely there are overwhelming reasons why they should make almost any kind of sacrifice to secure its universal acceptance. But what do they more than others? They are undoubtedly sticklers for implicit obedience to *some* of the teaching of Christ. Let them now include all of his teaching, and especially that saying of his that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." While it is probable that, measured by their ability to give, the Disciples are as liberal with regard to money matters as any other religious people, I feel sure they should excell all others in the munifi-

cence of their benevolence. In ordinary business affairs we pay for things according to what we conceive to be their real value. Now if the Disciples have a plea which is more valuable than that of any other religious people, ought they not to be willing to pay more for it, and ought they not to be willing to make almost any sacrifice to secure its general acceptance by the whole world? But this is not all I mean by making sacrifices. As already intimated, money-giving is all right in its proper place. But there is something vastly more valuable than money which Disciples can give in the great work of saving souls. They can give their time and energies. They can give their sympathies and prayers. They can give their manhood and womanhood to the service of him who has bought them with his own precious blood. We have no right to withhold the best gifts. I think it often happens that we try to buy freedom from personal sacrifices with a few shillings in money. Some of us contribute liberally of our means for foreign missions, when really we ought to go as missionaries ourselves, or we ought at least to encourage our children to do so. But the moment the great cause of missions makes a call upon us for personal consecration, we immediately withdraw into our selfishness, and continue to refuse to answer the call. Nevertheless, if the Disciple movement shall ever become a success, commensurate with its high claims, there ought to be ten thousand cries from all over the land every year, "send me into the ripe harvest fields, and I will do what I can to save perishing souls." When Disciples shall everywhere be animated by this spirit, then and not until then, will they begin to realize the full meaning of their Plea, as well as its triumphant victory over all opposing forces.

I am afraid that some make the false plea that their faith will save them no matter how little they give to the cause of Christ. They even quote what

Paul says about Abel's faith to prove that the value of sacrifice is not in the value of the gift in itself that is offered, but in the faith which is behind the gift. But Paul does not say it was Abel's faith that made his sacrifice more excellent than that of Cain; but what he does say is that it was Abel's faith that prompted him to select the better offering. It was by faith that he *offered* a more excellent sacrifice than Cain; the gift itself was the best he had—the firstling of his flock. We must bring the best we have when we are making sacrifices to God; and if we have robust faith, we will not be satisfied with an inferior gift; we will seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and trust that other needed things will be added.

XI. *We must keep before the world and emphasize the great fact that our plea is first of all an imperative demand for Christian liberty.* We have already seen that the Disciple movement gives a true conception of man, and that this conception involves the freedom of man to chose for himself. Now the Disciples must make this conception a practical reality in their religious development rather than a theoretical vision of what ought to be the case. Doubtless, in many respects, they have done this in their past history. They have persistently repudiated human creeds as bonds of Christian union and communion. They have earnestly contended for the rights of individual conscience in respect of all religious matters. But it may be questioned whether, in practice, they have always been true to this plea in every respect. It is probable that they have sometimes pressed their own convictions so decidedly upon the world as to practically ignore the convictions of others who differ with them. It is certainly a noble thing to feel that we are right in our own religious position, but it is at least a charitable thing to recognize the fact that others with whom we may differ

may just as sincerely realize that they are right.

It was precisely at this point where the Campbells, in their day, broke with the religious world. In studying the Scriptures they came to certain conclusions, and feeling the importance of these conclusions they began to proclaim them to the world. But the world was not ready to receive the new teaching, and consequently the Campbells were stigmatized as heretics, and doubtless would have shared the fate of the heretics of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, if the days of the stake and fagot had not gone out of fashion.

But Disciples are sometimes less tolerant with one another than they are with their religious neighbors. In contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints, each Disciple regards the whole matter simply from his own individual standpoint, and as this standpoint frequently differs in individual cases, it is easy to see how a continual conflict may arise among Disciples themselves, unless they are willing to cultivate that charity which "thinketh no evil." They think that the very first principle of fraternity is for all to adopt their exact point of view and echo precisely what they believe and teach. In short, they claim a whole world of liberty for themselves, but they seem utterly unwilling to grant any liberty at all to other people. They set up a distinct standard and then require every man to adopt this as his rule of faith and practice, while all who do not strictly pronounce their shibboleths are practically ostracized or in some way discounted as members of our reformatory movement.

Now, if those ardent defenders of the faith could come to understand that their procedure is precisely the very thing against which the Campbellian movement made its most emphatic protest, they would perhaps modify, to some extent at least, the dogmatic spirit which they show toward their brethren who do not exactly agree with them

in all their contentions. I do not hesitate to say that without the liberty to which I am calling attention, the Disciple movement may become as sectarian as any of the other religious movements that have had a place in the history of the Church. But if Disciples will honestly recognize the liberty for which I am contending, it is then possible to make our movement not only comprehensive enough to embrace all who love and serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but also make it possible to bring about such a union of all of these as will assure the conversion of the world within the near future. The tendency of all religious movements is to reproduce in themselves the very things against which they protested in the beginning, and out of which protests these movements had their origin. We must therefore guard well the point of Christian liberty if we want to make our movement a great success.

But I do not mean by Christian liberty what is practically nothing more or less than religious anarchy. When a man enters any kind of association where he is identified with other people, he cannot hope to have everything his own way. Nor can he expect everyone to think precisely as he thinks. The view-point of sectarianism makes the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians quite unnecessary as a part of the New Testament teaching. Indeed, that chapter might be left out of our Bibles entirely without any loss to Christian character. But as I prefer the old-fashioned canon to that narrow bigotry which gives no place for Christian charity, I am not yet ready to surrender the beautiful teaching of love, even to please some of our most ardent defenders of what they conceive to be the cardinal principles of the Disciple movement. But however this may be, of one thing I am well assured, viz., in order to the best possible success for our Plea, we must contend earnestly for the liberty which was one of the fundamental charac-

teristics of the movement when it was inaugurated by the Campbells and those associated with them.

XII. We must eliminate from our advocacy the idea of meum and tuum—mine and yours. Notwithstanding the catholicity of our Plea, we have not always been able to make others see it in that light. Indeed, not a few have regarded us as intensely sectarian, because we have, in their judgment, sought to monopolize what belongs to all Christians in common.

Now it is possible that sometimes our advocacy has not been altogether wise. This, however, is just what ought to have been expected. Many of our ministers have had little or no education, and some of these doubtless have not always been as careful in their relations to other religious people as they might have been. Perhaps it is quite true that here and there our people have made the impression that what we are aiming at is to have all the religious denominations unite with us, and consequently our religious plea is simply to absorb all other religious people in our own organization, and thus build up a great Church for ourselves.

But this does not properly express our aim at all. It is easy to show that our religious position presents a common, reasonable and workable ground for Christian union, and that this is one of the reasons why it is still needed, as Christian union has not yet been attained.

Now it may be well, just here, to notice an important fact with respect to the rise and progress of certain religious movements which mark the development of our modern Christianity. The Apostasy occupied some time in reaching its climax. It had "begun to work" in the days of the Apostle Paul, but it was not fully developed until just before the Reformation was started by Wycliffe, Luther, and those co-operating with them.

The movement out of the Apostasy was also gradual and by different successive steps. Luther

did a great work, but he did not accomplish everything. To a large extent he broke the power of the Pope to hold the individual conscience. He gave liberty to this conscience, and bade men think and act for themselves in religious matters.

Calvin also accomplished much in his day, and his work is still an important factor in the religion of the twentieth century. He emphasized the divine side in religious matters, and this was greatly needed in view of the fact that under the reign of Roman Catholicism, works of supererogation had come to take the place of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Wesley, while emphasizing the divine side in the plan of salvation, laid special stress also on the human side, insisting that we must show our faith by our works.

All these religious movements were in the right direction, but each one was only a partial development, and when taken altogether they do not represent a complete return to the primitive faith and practice. Each contributed something valuable without which the successive steps of progress could not have been made. In the historical evolution many things were gained by these special movements, but all that had been lost through the Apostasy was not entirely restored by them.

This brings us to the platform proposed by the Disciples. They do not claim to have originated this platform. It is simply the result of evolution from medieval Christianity, through Luther, Calvin, Wesley and others, who all contributed to the development of the position which the Disciples claim to occupy. The Disciples have built on the works of others largely, and they are glad to recognize their indebtedness to the great reformers who went before them, and to the religious movements which these reformers represent.

Now it will be seen, from these admissions, that a proper understanding of our historical attitude

utterly precludes the idea that we should regard the religious position which we occupy as our own exclusive property. It belongs to all who will occupy it, and it is ready for occupancy for all who will stand upon it. Indeed, I am satisfied that Christian union can be effected more readily by allowing the religious denominations to practically do their own reforming than by asking them all to come over and join us. Let the platform which has been eliminated from the confused elements of Christendom stand out as free to all. Let it be the ideal ground for Christian union and the evangelization of the world. Let it be free from any sectarian spirit or any cry of *meum* and *tuum*; and when Disciples shall be willing, with all other religious people, to manifest this spirit, as well as echo this trumpet call for the rallying of God's people, the time will not be long until the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.

Now to reach this grand consummation is precisely the aim of the Disciple movement. Does this look like sectarianism or exclusiveness? Or does it indicate that it is our supreme desire that all shall join *us*? Whatever may appear to be the case, from the denominational point of view, it can be affirmed with great emphasis, that the spirit of our movement, when it is fairly represented, is simply to secure the union of Christians upon a common platform where all can stand together and work for the glory of God and the salvation of men.

It may be that some of our people do not always exemplify this high purpose in their pleading for Christian union, but it cannot be denied that the main trend of our movement has always been and is now toward an unselfish and catholic platform which comprehends every consistent follower of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, our special work just now is to call the denominations to come up higher.

They are for the most part at present located where their great leaders left them; but these locations represent only partial returns to Apostolic faith and practice. They need now to move up to the broad and higher platform to which we invite them. We ask for no exclusive honors or privileges for ourselves. We will gladly share, on equal terms, all the great advantages of the catholic position for which we have so long and so earnestly contended. We most willingly recognize the fact that had it not been for such men as Luther, Calvin and Wesley, Alexander Campbell and his co-workers could never have done the work they did. At the same time, we earnestly believe that the Disciple movement has gained a higher position than that occupied by the reformations which preceded it. Historically considered, it presents the last and most comprehensive platform that has yet been reached in the evolution of Christianity from the Apostasy. It is the ultimate Protestantism.

Let us suppose a case which will illustrate what I mean. Suppose a general is commanded to capture a strongly fortified citadel. He proceeds by parallel approaches (to use the language of military men). His first point of attack is from a low position which does little or no execution, but it serves to "employ the enemy" (to use military language again), until a more commanding position is reached. The general now pulls his guns up higher, and from this point is able to do better execution; but still he cannot command the citadel. He continues to move up higher and higher, until at last he reaches a position from which his guns can demolish the fortifications before him.

Now this will help us to see how the platform has been erected on which the Disciples claim to stand. The attack was first made on the Apostasy from the somewhat low position occupied by Luther and his co-workers. Now, this low platform was essential to reaching the next one which was

occupied by Calvin and his co-workers. Then Wesley and his co-workers stood on the higher platform, while they erected one that was still higher. But even this last was not broad enough and high enough for all to stand together on and command the whole of the enemy's fortifications. But these different movements made it possible for Alexander Campbell and his co-workers to present a platform high enough to reach the enemy's works, and comprehensive enough for every Christian to occupy.

Now what Disciples say is this: Is it not un wisdom and poor tactics to still keep our guns down where Luther was, or where Calvin was, or even where Wesley was? These positions were well enough in their day, and they were all essential in the evolution of a comprehensive platform. They were important steps in the right direction. They were parts of a great development of Protestantism toward a universal brotherhood of Christians.

Now, however, having reached the high position to which attention has been called, Disciples insist that the old positions should be abandoned, and that all should come up higher to a platform that is common ground, and therefore thoroughly catholic; that is reasonable, and therefore in harmony with the demands of the age in which we live; that is workable, and therefore meets the practical conditions in the problem of taking the world for Christ.

Will the Churches be equal to the earnest call made by the Disciples? Are they capable of rising up to this high platform of charity? What a magnificent testimony they have it in their power to give in support of their Christian development? Would not such a step, as the one I have indicated, give a new and powerful impetus to the great work of saving souls? Such a course on the part of denominational Christendom would, in my judgment,

do more to overcome the skepticism of the present age and more to turn the world from Satan to God, than all the sermons and all the books that have been written within the last hundred years. Indeed, such a course would lead to the practical overthrow of the most determined opposition to the spread of the Gospel, and would, doubtless, usher in the glorious day when the kingdoms of this world would become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ. The question now is, Who is sufficient for these things?

Will the world's conversion be accomplished no matter what Disciples or others may do? I do not hesitate to answer this question in the affirmative. There is nothing about which I feel greater assurance than that the Gospel will be preached to the nations. This is the Divine intention, and the result is just as sure as that the Word of God cannot fail. It is highly probable that some will continue to reject the Gospel even when all obstacles are entirely removed. But this does not alter our duty as regards the work committed to our hands. Undoubtedly it is part of the obligations resting upon us to remove, as far as possible, the obstacles which are now in the way of success, so that the last excuse which hinders may be taken out of the way. But it is almost certain that when every obstacle has been removed, some will still hesitate to accept and some will definitely reject the Gospel message. However, I do not doubt that when the way is once made clear, when the Gospel is preached precisely as it was in the days of the Apostles, and when the union of God's people has been assured, the success which will then follow will be at least somewhat commensurate with our most sanguine expectations.

If we need encouragement in such a hope as this we have only to look at what has already been done. Take the last century as a promise of future results. Behold the great triumphs which

have been achieved! Never since the early days of Christianity have such victories for the Gospel been recorded. And it must be remembered that all this has been accomplished under the discouraging conditions to which I have called attention. Now if so much has been done, right in the face of a false theory of conversion, wrong methods of preaching and work, and a divided and consequently enfeebled Christendom, what may we not expect when all these evils are removed, and the Churches shall be organized and their work conducted in harmony with New Testament teaching and example?

I am certainly not over-sanguine. I fully recognize the difficulty of the problem which has to be solved. I know too well the weakness of human nature and the power of evil to thwart the purposes of good. But notwithstanding all this, I have definite faith in the power of God and the promises of his word. It may be that the people of this generation will not recognize the weighty obligations which rest upon them. It may be that some will even laugh at my enthusiasm. But for all that, the work will be done. Disciples may not have any part in it; we may prove ourselves unworthy of the great trust reposed in us; we may turn from the splendid opportunities which we have inherited; we may stubbornly refuse to enter in at the door which, in the providence of God, has been opened to us. But all this will only delay the accomplishment of God's purpose in the world. The Gospel must be preached. It must be preached in its purity and simplicity. It must be carried into all the world and preached to every creature. And if we do not cheerfully accept our part in the work, I do not hesitate to say that the great privilege of doing so will finally be taken away from us, and the work will be committed to other hands.

But I cannot believe that we will be so recreant to the holy trust. The people are waking up to

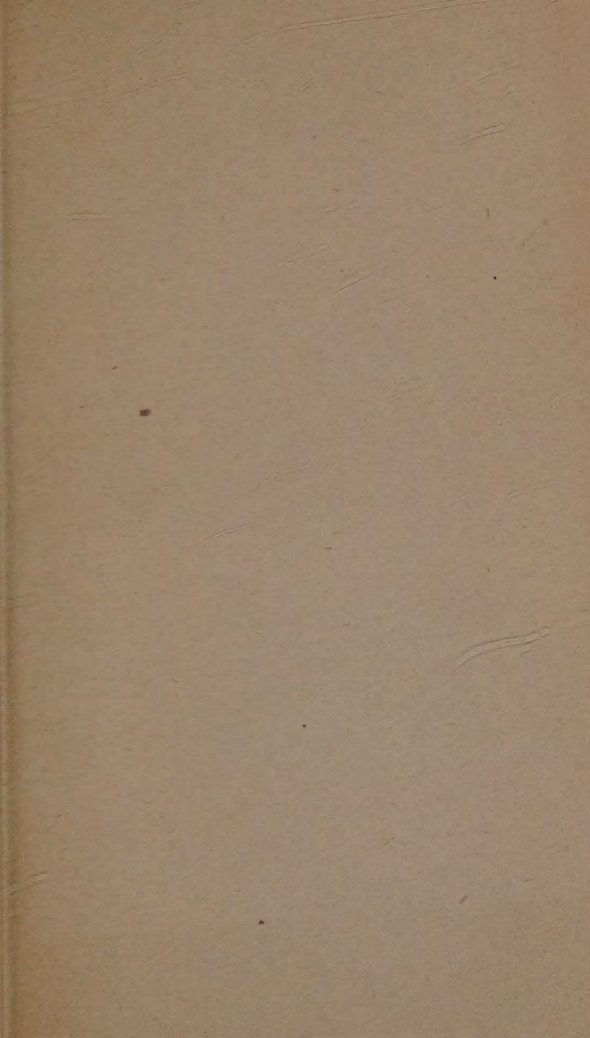
their responsibility all over the land. The standard of reform has been raised in many parts of the earth, and the principles which the Disciples have advocated are beginning to be received with favor almost everywhere, while much of the success of the Gospel, which marks the beginning of the twentieth century, is undoubtedly due largely to the influence of the Disciple movement upon the religious progress of the age. Let us then be faithful to the great Plea we are making and the day is not far distant when we shall see a united Church and then soon will follow the conversion of the world to Christ.

However, before closing, it may be well to guard against a possible discouragement which might present itself to the mind of the hearer. The Disciple position may appear to be impossible from a practical point of view. I hope no one will accept this notion as a finality without an honest look at all the facts of the case. It appears to me that the times are propitious for just such a religious movement as that of the Disciples. There is restlessness everywhere throughout the religious world. Men are feeling their way to something better than the present state of things. No one is satisfied as matters now stand, though the outlook may be better, in some respects, than it ever was before. Surely this is just the day to issue a call to move up toward the mountain top. The fogs are on the lowlands; there is clearness of vision up higher. We may have some difficulty in climbing. No matter for that. Difficulty is really the measure of duty. The greater the difficulty, the greater is our responsibility. But however this may be, no one will dispute the need of an inspiring ideal, if we wish to accomplish anything worth living for in the present world. The average Christian ideal, at the beginning of the twentieth century, has nothing in it to incite to deeds of noble daring. Much of the Christian life of to-day is colorless

and tasteless. We want something that will appeal to the heroic in men and women, and then we shall begin to grow martyrs who will dare even die for perishing souls. My suggestions may, at least, furnish a text for sermons which will become a torch that will enlighten the world.

All things are possible to faith that's strong,
While failure always follows with the wrong.
No easy road we'll find on duty's way,
But strength is promised for each toilsome day.
Huge mountains on our pathway must be scaled,
In climbing which some have already failed.
But is it possible our work to do?
If so, we all our efforts should renew,
And by the most determined purpose make
A great and final forward move to take
The world for our imperial, sovereign Lord;
And thus to end all wars and sin's discord.
Truth's banner then aloft will be unfurled,
And waive in triumph o'er a conquered world.

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